

1999

Illawarra at War

Vivienne Caldwell
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Illawarra at War

An examination of the characteristics and experiences of the Illawarra volunteers during World War I, and the impact of death on the home front.

Honours thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the subject HIST401 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons), Department of History and Politics, University of Wollongong.

Vivienne Caldwell

Supervisor: Dr John McQuilton

Department of History and Politics

University of Wollongong

1999

I certify that this thesis is entirely my own work except where I have given fully documented references to the work of others. The material contained in this thesis has not been submitted for formal assessment in any formal course.

Vivienne Caldwell
July 1999

Synopsis

The experience of Australian volunteers in World War I has been the subject of extensive research and comment by historians. Much of this has been of a general nature with few studies undertaken from a regional viewpoint. Illawarra at War addresses some of the issues previously examined by historians, but from a regional perspective.

A number of aspects of participation by the Illawarra volunteers have much in common with the rest of the nation. Motivations, front line experiences and the impact of death all have threads of commonality. However some other features do not. Many of the characteristics of the Illawarra volunteer were dependent on the region from which they enlisted. Religious affiliation, occupational structure and a strong familial base are all features of the Illawarra region which were in turn identifiable characteristic of the Illawarra volunteers. Statistical analyses have been used to isolate and examine these characteristics and the relationship between death, locality and social standing.

Using official and private records the varied military experiences of some of the volunteers is revealed. Official records also document the failings of the AIF in delivering vital information to the families of the volunteers. Death was inevitable for many. The final aspect of this study looks at the way in which the Illawarra community responded to death and the mourning process.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Chart and Tables</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Illustrations</i>	<i>iv</i>
Introduction	1
Chapter One	5
Coal, cows and cousins: The Illawarra in 1914	
Chapter Two	11
Young, single, unskilled and Protestant Enlistment Patterns and Characteristics	
Chapter Three	35
“A glamorous adventure perhaps” Motivations for Enlistment	
Chapter Four	55
“I know the chances are I shall not come back” The War Experience of the Illawarra Volunteers	
Chapter Five	73
“Though death divides, fond memory lives” Death and the Home Front	
Conclusion	91
Bibliography	93

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Finally, and most importantly, I thank my families who have tolerated so much from me.

Abbreviations

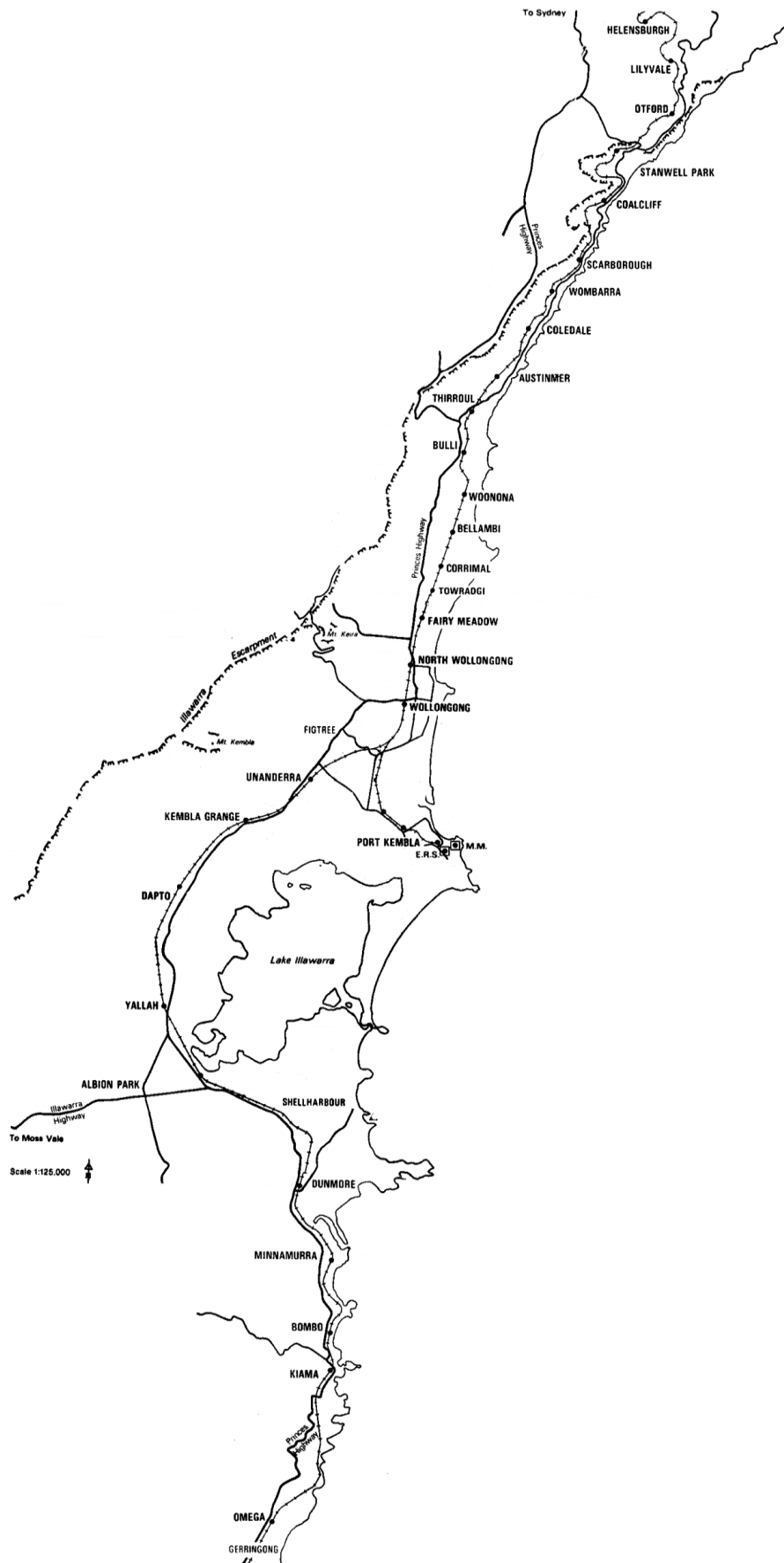
AAMC	Australian Army Medical Corps
AANS	Australian Army Nursing Service
AGH	Australian General Hospital
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ANMEF	Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force
ANU	Australian National University
AWL	Absent without leave
AWM	Australian War Memorial
Bdr	Bombardier
Bn	Battalion
Cpl	Corporal
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
DOW	Died of wounds
Dvr	Driver
FAB	Field Artillery Brigade
Gnr	Gunner
JAWM	Journal of the Australian War Memorial
KIA	Killed in action
L/Cpl	Lance Corporal
LH	Light Horse Regiment
Lt	Lieutenant
Lt-Col.	Lieutenant-Colonel
MC	Military Cross
NOK	Next of kin
Pte	Private
RSL	Returned and Services League of Australia
RTA	Returned to Australia
Sgt	Sergeant
Spr	Sapper
Tpr	Trooper

Chart and Tables

Chart 1 Enlistment patterns by month	13
Table 1 Enlistment rate: total males and eligible males	12
Table 2 Enlistment by date and age	16
Table 3 Age of volunteers Illawarra and AIF	18
Table 4 Marital Status	19
Table 5 Religious Affiliations of Volunteers	21
Table 6 Enlistment by locality	23
Table 7 Occupations. Illawarra:AIF	25
Table 8 Occupations. Illawarra:Yackandandah Shire	26
Table 9 Death rate of Illawarra volunteers in units with more than 20 Illawarra Enlistments	28
Table 10 Waratahs: Religion	32
Table 11 Waratahs: Occupations	33
Table 12 Waratahs: Age at enlistment	33

Illustrations

The Illawarra Region	v
The Waratahs outside the Balgownie School of Arts	49
Corrimal Public School Honour Roll 1914-1917	83
Buchanan home in Princess Street, Corrimal	84
Mitchell's message to Private Buchanan	84
Postcard printed by Albert Mitchell for Christmas 1917	85



The Illawarra Region

Introduction

A considerable body of literature exists relating to Australia's involvement in World War I, ranging from the general to the particular. From a national perspective are the works of Ernest Scott, Michael McKernan and Joan Beaumont.¹ Studies concentrating on events at a state level include those by Marilyn Lake, Bobbie Oliver and Raymond Evans.² The range and number of subject specific works are extensive such as the studies by Bill Gammage on the war through the words of the soldiers, Lloyd Robson on the recruitment of the AIF, Richard White on motivations for enlistment, Jan Bassett on nurses, Narelle Crux on women and Michael McKernan on churches at home and chaplains at the front.³ Numerous too are the works that concentrate on military aspects of the war which began with the comprehensive coverage given by Charles Bean and his team of authors responsible for the first ten volumes of the *Official History*. Another body of work looks at the experiences of the participants through recalled

¹ Scott, Ernest, *Official History, Vol. XI, Australia During the War*, AWM, 1936; McKernan, Michael, *The Australian People and the Great War*, Nelson, 1980; Beaumont, Joan (ed.), *Australia's War, 1914-18*, Allen & Unwin, 1995.

² Lake, Marilyn, *A Divided Society. Tasmania during World War I*, Melbourne University Press, 1975; Oliver, Bobbie, *War and Peace in Western Australia. The Social and Political impact of the Great War 1914-1926*, University of Western Australia Press, 1995; Evans, Raymond, *Loyalty and Disloyalty: Social Conflict on the Queensland Homefront 1914-18*, Allen & Unwin, 1987.

³ Gammage, Bill, *The Broken Years. Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, ANU Press, 1974; Robson, L L, *The First AIF. A Study of its Recruitment 1914-1918*, Melbourne University Press, 1970; White, Richard, 'Motives for joining up: self sacrifice, self-interest and social class 1914-18', *JAWM*, 9 (October 1986), pp. 3-16; Bassett, Jan, 'Ready to serve: Australian women in the Great War', *JAWM*, 2, (April 1983), pp. 8-16 and Bassett, Jan, *Guns and Brooches. Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War*, Oxford University Press, 1992, Part II; Crux, Narelle, *Keeping the Home Fires Burning. A study of the roles of women in the Illawarra during the First World War and the effects of the war upon their position in society*, Unpublished BA (Hons) Thesis, University of Wollongong, 1981; McKernan, Michael, *Australian Churches at War. Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches 1914-1918*, Catholic Theological Faculty and AWM, 1980 and McKernan, Michael, *Padre. Australian Chaplains in Gallipoli and France*, Allen & Unwin, 1986.

memories such as Alistair Thomson's oral history project and Albert Facey's autobiographical account.⁴

Much of this literature falls into main two areas, that of the experience of the men, and the impact of the war on the homefront. This division by historians is suggestive of a clear demarcation of the impact of war on society. As the war was fought at a considerable distance from Australia, only men of eligible age were involved in battle: the rest of the population at home lived under changed circumstances as a result of war. But there were also strong threads of commonality. Geographically the war was very distant, but the effect of, and damage of war, became painfully apparent as Australians became involved in battle.

Despite the proliferation of literature relating to World War I there is a significant gap in studies at regional and local level. Jenny Stock and Ina Bertrand have explored the conscription issue at this level, and John McQuilton has examined the impact of war on the Shire of Yackandandah in north-eastern Victoria.⁵

Regional studies are an important, if neglected part, of the broader picture. For the first time Australians fought in a major conflict as a nation, an event significant in our history, and in the building of a national identity. At a regional level communities responded as part of the nation, but also in ways determined by their own local influences. Regional studies allow the testing of the generalisations of broader history at a level which can examine the actual, rather than the assumed, experiences and responses of individuals and communities to events which have an impact on their lives. In looking

⁴ Thompson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories. Living with the Legend*, Oxford University Press, 1994; Facey, Albert, *A Fortunate Life*, Penguin, 1987.

⁵ Stock, Jenny Tilby, "Farmers and the rural vote in South Australia in World War I: the 1916 conscription referendum", *Historical Studies*, 21, 8, April 1985, pp. 391-411; Bertrand, Ina, "The Victorian country vote in the conscription referendums of 1916 and 1917: The case of the Wannon electorate", *Labour History*, 26, May 1974, pp. 19-31; McQuilton, John, "A Shire at War. Yackandandah 1914-18", *JAWM*, 11, (October 1987), pp. 3-15.

at the Illawarra this study will attempt to fill part of the gap in this sector of the literature.

For the purposes of this study, the Illawarra region is defined by a number of criteria. Geographically it encompasses the coastal strip from Gerringong in the south to Helensburgh in the north bounded on the west by the escarpment and on the east by the sea. Although this is approximately the area known as the Illawarra in the 1990s, this was not the determining factor. Rather, the contemporary identification of the Illawarra as projected by the people was the major determinant. That the identity of the Illawarra has remained the same is a strong example of regional persistence.

Region implies an individual's attachment to place, and the 'place's' attachment to those deemed to be their own. A strong sense of community spirit is evident in both public and private discourse. The press 'claimed' many volunteers as 'local lads' even though they had left the region. Schools, especially Corrimal Public School, followed the fortunes of former students who had enlisted. Familial links were even stronger. The physical region can be easily described, the Illawarra volunteer is more difficult to define. Some volunteers who are listed on memorials have been found to have no other identifiable links with the Illawarra. Yet to someone they were considered to have been a member of the community. Therefore the decision to identify a volunteer as coming from the Illawarra has been determined by contemporary clues, and not just by having a physical presence in the Illawarra region at the time of their enlistment.

Illawarra at War is a study of the men and women of the Illawarra region who volunteered for overseas service during World War I. It is not possible to cover all aspects of the war in this thesis, therefore it will concentrate on four main aspects: enlistment patterns and characteristics, motivations to enlist, the experience of some of the volunteers at the front line and then in bringing the story back to the Illawarra, the response of the most feared aspect of war, death, on those at home in the Illawarra.

Structurally the thesis falls into five chapters. Chapter 1 briefly describes the evolution of the social background and economic structure of the Illawarra in 1914. Chapter 2 is statistical and comparative, examining characteristics of the Illawarra volunteers as a regional group with other studies. The motivations behind the enlistment of the Illawarra volunteers and the problems in identifying these are examined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 explores different aspects of the front line war experience of the Illawarra's volunteers. An inevitable result of battle for many men was death, and the impact of this on their families and the community is examined in Chapter 5.

For the statistical analyses of Chapter 2 no set of data existed for the Illawarra, therefore it was necessary to compile this information. The resulting database currently contains military and genealogical information relating to 2 336 known volunteers who enlisted from this region. The data was compiled from a wide range of official, civil and private records. Official records used for statistical information include AWM 8 Unit Embarkation Rolls, AWM 133 Nominal of AIF Abroad, AWM 131 Roll of Honour Circulars, AWM 145 Roll of Honour and NAA B4255 Personnel Dossiers. Birth, Death and Marriage indexes and certificates were used to establish identity and family relationships, as were letters and diaries in private and public collections. The initial source of identifying Illawarra volunteers was the local press and the names listed on war memorials.

Chapter One

Coal, cows and cousins

The Illawarra in 1914

The characteristics of the Illawarra region at the outbreak of World War I reflect a mixture of early patterns of settlement and the substantial changes brought about by the establishment of coal mines, the railway and industry. Despite the diversification in the economy brought about these three factors, the region was still very much a collection of rural villages in 1914. The larger towns of Wollongong and Kiama were both ports and commercial centres for the northern and southern parts respectively.

Although coal had been sighted in the northern reaches of the region as early as 1797, it had been the extensive stands of cedar that had attracted the first white invaders to the Illawarra. The potential of the rich land for agriculture did not go unnoticed either, and most of the land had been allocated as free grants by 1831.⁶ In the southern parts these were generally large tracts of land where various agricultural pursuits were attempted. Dairy farming was found to be the most suitable and had become the dominant form of farming by 1914. Settlement in the south and west was aided by assisted immigration schemes and the efforts of John Dunmore Lang and Caroline Chisholm who brought families to these areas, the majority of whom were able to make a living as tenant farmers and remained in the district.

In the northern suburbs where the coastal strip is much narrower many smaller grants were made. Larger grants, such as Buckland's 2 560 acre Balgownie Estate, were quickly carved up and had been sold as small farms by the mid-nineteenth century. The opening of coal mines in this part of the

⁶ Cousins, *The Garden of New South Wales*, p.66.

region from 1849 onwards brought an influx of immigrants, many of whom arrived as complete families. With the opening of mines came mining villages such as Mount Kembla, Mount Keira, Balgownie, Woonona, Bulli, Coledale, Scarborough and Helensburgh.

Much of the stability and community spirit evident during World War I in the region can be attributed to the strong family networks that had been established during the 1800s. By 1914 some families had been in the district for almost 100 years and with large families common, extensive familial networks had extended throughout the region. Opportunities for employment for females in the region were severely limited, subsequently there was a tendency to marry at a young age. At Bulli during the late nineteenth century almost half the female population were married before the age of 21 years and 80 per cent of brides and grooms were living the district at the time of their marriage.⁷

Some groups of migrants who settled in the region were from specific areas in the United Kingdom and settled in certain areas of the Illawarra. A large proportion of migrants who settled in Kiama and Jamberoo during the late 1830s and early 1840s were Irish Protestants. Coal miners and their families arriving in the latter part of the 1800s were usually from mining towns in England, Wales and Scotland.

All social classes were represented throughout the Illawarra. A number of southern families had prospered with dairying activities. Others, such as the Osbornes, were also entrepreneurial and extended their wealth with judicious purchases of coal-bearing land and extensive inland purchases. There were also many opportunities for those from more humble backgrounds. A number of early land-owners had been convicts and children of convicts who had built up considerable land holdings, or had established businesses which had prospered by the outbreak of war. Poverty was not a stranger to the region either, especially for families dependent on

⁷ Mitchell and Sherington, *Growing up in the Illawarra*, p. 44.

the irregular work in mines. Shacks and tents were sometimes home to large families in the mining villages.

In 1911 the population of the Illawarra was 27 711. By 1914 the population would have increased at least a little as it probable that some of the substantially increased numbers of assisted immigrants arriving in New South Wales between 1911 and 1915 came to the region.⁸

The opening of the railway line which traversed the region and connected it with Sydney had provided new employment opportunities. A large influx of single men working on railway line construction and maintenance inflated the population of Thirroul and Helensburgh before and during the war. During the war Thirroul became the central railway depot for the Illawarra with large marshalling yards opened there in February 1917.⁹ The railway had also made the Illawarra a tourist destination with Thirroul the most popular locality. The construction of the railway yards gave the area an industrial feel and due to the railway workers occupying most of the available accommodation, Austinmer became the preferred tourist destination.

Further employment became available with the development of Port Kembla as an industrial site. This was well underway by the outbreak of war, with the first stage of harbour works completed in 1903. The Electrolytic Refining and Smelting Company, a Melbourne-based and German-owned firm, was the first heavy industry to set up works at Port Kembla. Metal Manufactures was established in 1916 and the rapid expansion of both companies was due to the demand for metal products brought about by the war.¹⁰

⁸ Assisted immigrants arriving in New South Wales had numbered 15 921 during the period 1906-1910, but rose to 42 061 between 1911-1915. Vamplew, *Australians. Historical Statistics*, p. 5.

⁹ Singleton, *Railway History in Illawarra*, pp.24-26.

¹⁰ Richardson, *The Bitter Years*, pp. 5-8.

In the southern part of the Illawarra the major opportunity for work for unskilled labourers was at the blue metal quarries of Kiama and Bombo. The demand for blue metal for roads and railways continued through the war with the government operating the major quarries at Kiama and Bombo.¹¹

Even prior to connection with Sydney by rail the Illawarra had been well served by commercial enterprises. As the commercial hubs of the region, Wollongong and Kiama provided all the goods and services necessary for life. The spiritual needs of the inhabitants had been met by the numerous churches that had been established in every village and had flourished to the extent that many had replaced their original buildings with more substantial and ornate ones by the turn of the century.¹² The minor Protestant congregations like the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists were amply represented in the Illawarra: the combined percentage of these denominations was 28.1 per cent of the population in 1901 compared to 21.8 per cent for New South Wales.¹³

The Illawarra region was served by three major local newspapers. The *Illawarra Mercury* and *Kiama Independent* were quite patriotic and conservative. The *South Coast Times* exhibited a somewhat less patriotic tone. All published news on the war, but were largely concerned with local issues and the aspects of the war that were affecting the community. For a wider view of events, Sydney newspapers were readily available.

Politically the Illawarra was divided by not only electoral boundaries, but by political preferences as well. Labor support was strong in the northern part of the region, with conservative support dominant in the south. Federally, the whole region was within the electorate of Illawarra which was held by Labor's George Burns from 1914 until 1917 when he lost to the Nationalist Lamond. At state level the seat of Wollongong, which covered the area

¹¹ Bayley, *Blue Haven*, p. 151.

¹² Piggin, *Faith of Steel*, Chapter 3.

¹³ Calculated from Illawarra and state figures from the 1901 Census.

from just south of Wollongong to Helensburgh, was by held by long-standing parliamentarian John Barnes Nicholson until 1917.¹⁴ Having been expelled by the Labor party for supporting the conscription referendum in 1916, Nicholson lost to Labor candidate Billy Davies at the 1917 election.¹⁵ The southern part of the Illawarra was part of the state electorate of Allowrie which was held by Liberals until Nationalist George Fuller won the seat in 1917. As a Free Trader Fuller had held the seat of Illawarra from 1901 until 1914, when he had lost to Burns.

Unionism was first established in the Bulli area with the support of the strong Primitive Methodist population who were closely connected with early unionists. By 1914 the ideals of the Industrial Workers of the World had been introduced by militant and more recently arrived activists, particularly in mining villages between Coledale and Helensburgh.

Rifle clubs and volunteer infantry units proliferated in the region from the 1860s, not totally as a preparation for war, but also as sporting and social organisations. Mounted units were very popular in the south and western parts of the Illawarra.¹⁶ By 1885 Volunteer Artillery units had also been established in Wollongong and at Bulli.¹⁷ Prior to World War I Illawarra men belonging to the these voluntary formations had given the first, if basic, training to the local men who had ventured overseas during the Sudan and Boer conflicts.

For purely sporting pursuits there was a seemingly endless array available in the Illawarra. Many of the wealthy southern farmers were also keen breeders of racehorses, which they continued to race throughout the war,

¹⁴ Nicholson held his seats of Woronora (1894-1904) and Wollongong (1904-1917) as Independent Labor 1894, Independent 1895-1898, Free Trader 1898-1901, Independent Labor 1901-1904, Labour 1904-1916. He was expelled from the Labor Party in 1916 and stood as a Nationalist in 1917 but was defeated. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11: 1891-1939, p. 28.

¹⁵ Hagan and Wells (eds), *A History of Wollongong*, pp. 161-2.

¹⁶ Reports of voluntary military units frequently appeared in the local press. See also Bayley, *op cit*, pp. 62-64, 120.

¹⁷ Sutton, *Soldiers of the Queen*, p. 43.

providing both themselves and other interested members of the community with a recreational diversion from everyday life. Cricket, soccer and tennis clubs were found in every locality and judging from the frequent notices in the press it appears that competitions in these sports were not overly curtailed by the war.

By 1914 the character of the region had changed from its rural beginnings with the development of industry and transport facilities. However, many of the attributes of a close community survived. During the war the local press reflected a society that was still very much a collection of small villages than a large town. Individuals were named and described as if they were known to all, and in many cases they probably were. The strength of family relationships within the region had been a feature since the earliest days of settlement. In the north coal mining had become the most common form of employment with workers living in villages close to the mine in which they worked, and in the south farming pursuits were family operations. All of these factors, along with the land-locked geography of the region contributed to the development of the close-knit society that existed in 1914.

Chapter Two

Young, single, unskilled and Protestant Enlistment Patterns and Characteristics

This chapter provides a statistical picture of the Illawarra volunteers, comparing them in some respects with other statistical studies. Historians have undertaken a number of statistical analyses of the AIF and more specific groups of volunteers. Lloyd Robson used data from 0.5 per cent of attestation papers to test the claims made by Bean in the official history of the domination of the bush ethos in the AIF, and also of his notions of democracy in the origin and characteristics of the volunteers.¹⁸ Using all volunteers from a region, John McQuilton has made a detailed study of the characteristics of men enlisting and the response to the call to arms for the rural Shire of Yackandandah in north-eastern Victoria.¹⁹ In his examination of the Kangaroos, Les Hetherington has analysed a smaller, more specific group of recruits who had volunteered under circumstances very different to that of the majority of the AIF.²⁰

Elements of all of these studies have been used to analyse and compare the Illawarra volunteers. As a sub-set of the whole AIF, statistics relating to the Illawarra can show how alike or different the composition of this group was in comparison to the whole force. Similar comparisons can also be made with McQuilton's study with the addition of the variables which could be attributed to the regional composition of volunteers. Comparisons with the Kangaroo march are possible as a similar march, that of the Waratahs, passed through the Illawarra region at the same time the Kangaroos were trekking from Wagga Wagga to Sydney. Unless otherwise stated, figures relating to the AIF are from Robson's 0.5% sample.

¹⁸ Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First AIF', *Historical Studies*, pp. 737-749.

¹⁹ McQuilton, *op cit*, pp. 3-15.

²⁰ Hetherington, 'The Kangaroos March. Wagga to Sydney, December 1915 – January 1916', *JAWM*, 26, April 1995, pp. 19-25.

The analysis begins with enlistments as a proportion of the population and patterns of enlistment and responses over time. Comparisons and analyses of age, marital status, ethnic origin, religion, occupation and locality enlistments are followed by an examination of the relationship between death and place of residence. Finally, a comparison of the Waratahs with the Kangaroos and the Illawarra region demonstrates the different characteristics of this set of volunteers.

The 2 336 Illawarra volunteers represent 8.4 per cent of the total population of the region.²¹ This is about the same for Australia (8.5 per cent) and slightly less than the percentage for New South Wales (8.8 per cent).²² As a percentage of the total male population, the Illawarra and Yackandandah Shire both contributed proportionally fewer volunteers than the AIF, but as a percentage of the eligible male population both regional centres exceeded the AIF figure.

Table 1
Enlistment rate as a percentage of total males and eligible males²³

	Illawarra	Yackandandah Shire	AIF
% male population	16.2	15	18
% eligible male population	40.5	40	38

Enlistment Patterns

By comparing enlistment patterns over time it is possible to show whether or not local events had an influence on the rate at which men volunteered. Chart 1 compares the pattern of enlistment of the Illawarra volunteers month by month, with those of the AIF²⁴ and New South Wales. Overall, the

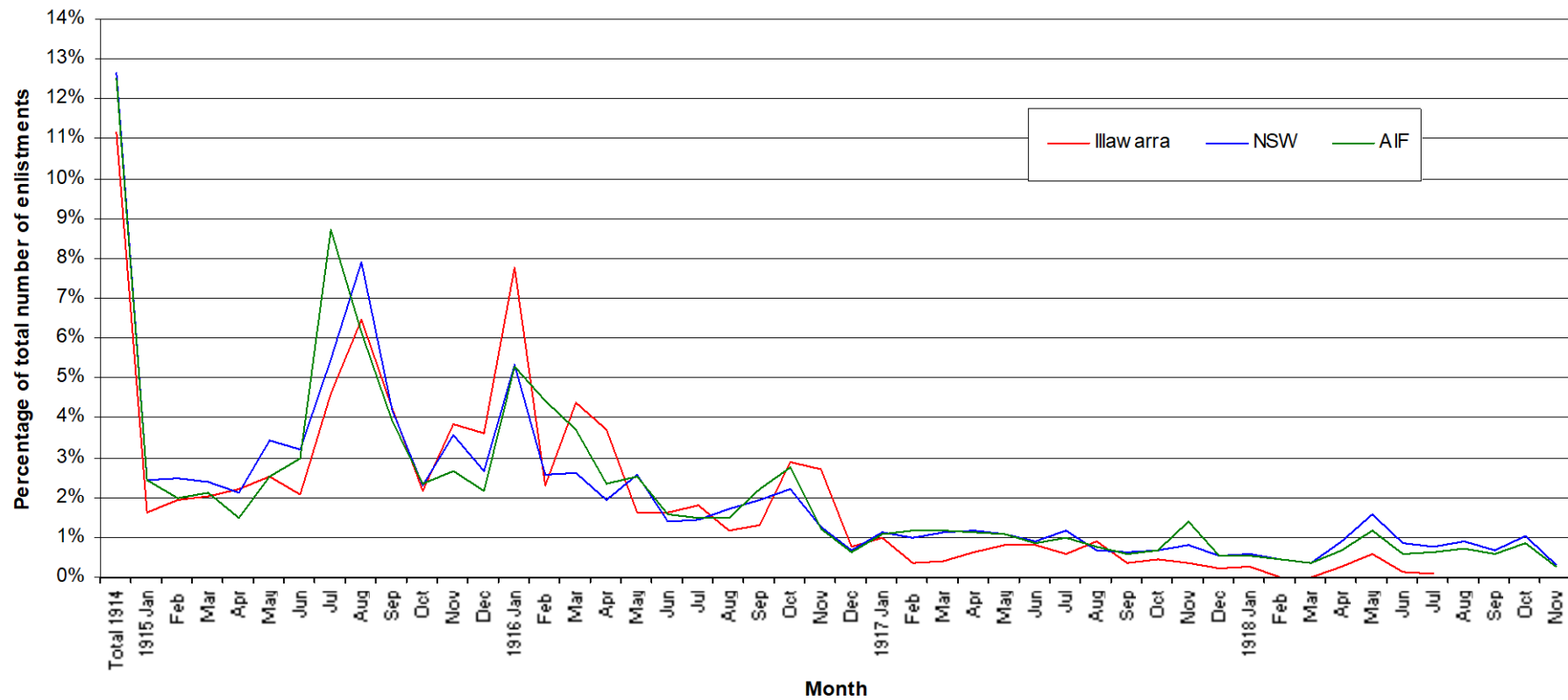
²¹ Based on 1911 Census figures. Although the population would have risen by 1914 by both natural increase and immigration, 1911 Census figures have been used as numbers for all localities from the Illawarra region are readily available. Later demographic sources such as rate books and electoral rolls present are not entirely suitable as the limits of the geographic region for this study do not conform to local and state boundaries.

²² Scott, *op cit*, p. 874.

²³ Illawarra percentages are calculated by the same method as those for the Shire of Yackandandah. See McQuilton, *op cit*, Endnote 8, p. 14. AIF figures are those quoted by McQuilton.

²⁴ To give a viable and visible comparison to state and national figures the monthly enlistment numbers have been converted to a percentage of the respective total enlistments.

Chart 1
Enlistment patterns by month
Monthly enlistments as a percentage of total enlistment²⁵



²⁵ Up to three different enlistment dates exist for each volunteer. Attestation papers, unit embarkation rolls (AWM 8) and the nominal roll may all give the same or different date although the variation is usually of only a few days. When known, the date given on unit embarkation rolls is used. Illawarra percentages are calculated from 1926 known enlistment dates for Illawarra volunteers.

Illawarra response follows the same general pattern that is evident for the AIF and New South Wales, but with a few anomalies and localised peaks.

Illawarra response follows the same general pattern that is evident for the AIF and New South Wales, but with a few anomalies and localised peaks.

It is apparent that both New South Wales and the Illawarra lagged behind AIF figures in mid 1915. The number of volunteers had dropped considerably by April 1915, and despite a slight increase in May and June of that year, the number of men coming forward had dwindled to such an extent that the federal government was prompted to debate the ways in which men could be more effectively recruited. This led to a concerted effort in the form of a recruiting drive in Victoria in July 1915, which had astounding results and was responsible for the AIF enlistment peak in that month.²⁶ Similar drives were then undertaken in other states which also resulted in increased numbers of volunteers coming forward, although not on the scale of that of Victoria.²⁷ But without sustained efforts numbers once again began to dwindle. Ernest Scott attributed the May and June increases that occurred without the aid of recruiting measures to the fact that Australian troops were at last in battle, but by September and October 1915 he argued that increasing knowledge of the futility of the Dardanelles situation had the reverse effect.²⁸

The AIF, New South Wales and the Illawarra all exhibit an increase in January 1916. The drop during December 1915 was not as pronounced in the Illawarra, and the peak percentage in January 1916 was considerably higher than that registered for New South Wales and the AIF. One local contributing factor for this is could have been the Waratah march, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

²⁶ During July 1915 in Victoria 21 698 volunteers enlisted as compared with 3 381 in June and 3 983 in August of that year. See Scott, *op cit*, pp. 871-72 for a state by state breakdown of enlistment numbers.

²⁷ New South Wales numbers rose from 8 961 in July to 12 991 in August. Scott, *op cit*, pp. 292.

²⁸ *ibid*, pp. 290, 294.

Despite the large number of enlistments in early 1916, the point had been reached where the numbers of rejected men were exceeding those who were accepted. In March 1916 the *Illawarra Mercury* noted that of 34 volunteers who had presented themselves for enlistment, 23 had been rejected.²⁹ This pattern continued throughout the year. When 89 men presented themselves at Shellharbour in response to the call-up in October 1916, 18 were passed, 20 were rejected and six were listed as doubtful. The remaining 45 men applied for their cases to be heard before the newly created exemption courts.

Generally the local events most likely to affect enlistments were strikes involving miners, an employment category with a high number of workers and potential recruits. In October of 1916, the month of the first referendum on conscription, a small peak was evident for the AIF, New South Wales and the Illawarra. This peak extended in the Illawarra over a period which also encompassed a major strike over wages and conditions. The threat of compulsion to enlist, combined with loss of income due to the strike may have prompted some men to look to the AIF. However, in late 1917 industrial unrest in the form of another strike, often referred to as the 'General Strike' appears to have little impact on the region. Although termed as 'general', this industrial protest only involved 15 per cent of total employees in Australia³⁰ and most directly affected miners and transport workers. The period of this strike corresponds with a drop in enlistments from the Illawarra. Newspaper reports during this time give a picture of a community both war weary and strike weary. Throughout the course of the dispute the local press did not report overwhelming support for the strike. Death was in the air at this time, with September 1917 recording the third highest number of war deaths during the war.³¹ Strikers were well supported with relief funds³² and engaged in numerous recreational

²⁹ *Illawarra Mercury* 14 March 1916

³⁰ Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, p. 254.

³¹ Thirty seven deaths were recorded for September 1917. Only July 1916 (50 deaths) and August 1915 (39 deaths) exceeded this number.

³² At Port Kembla the Electrolytic Employees' Union was distributing relief pay to its members at the rate of 30s per week for married men and 1 pound per week for single men.

activities³³ during the extra leisure time generated by the strike. Marches to support the strike were poorly attended and at times cancelled for lack of participants.³⁴ Workers had had enough, they were not motivated to fully support the strike or to enlist in the AIF.

In his study of AIF enlistments Lloyd Robson identifies three distinct periods of enlistment.³⁵ The first, from August 1914 until June 1915 was the period of the truest voluntarism where little official pressure was used to encourage enlistment. The second period, from July 1915 until August 1916 is characterised by the Victorian recruiting drives and the government announcement of their desire to introduce conscription. The third period was from September 1916 until the end of the war.

Table 2
Enlistment by date and age
Percentage of total enlistments for each age group in each enlistment period³⁶

	Aug 1914- Jun 1915		July 1915 - Aug 1916		Sep 1916 - Nov 1918	
Age	Illawarra	AIF sample	Illawarra	AIF sample	Illawarra	AIF sample
18-19	2.2	2.6	8.6	6.6	2.0	5.1
20-24	14.7	10.7	21.0	18.1	5.5	8.9
25-29	6.7	5.3	12.3	11.1	3.8	4.5
30-34	2.7	3.2	6.6	5.5	2.7	3.1
35-39	1.3	1.7	4.1	4.0	2.0	2.4
40+	0.4	0.7	2.5	4.3	0.8	1.7
Total	28.0	24.1	55.2	49.6	16.8	25.8

From the percentages in Table 2 it can be seen that the Illawarra volunteers enlisted in higher proportions during the first two periods. The close

Illawarra Mercury, 28 September 1917. Consignments of fish and rabbits were distributed to the men on strike at Coledale with the comment made that ‘they are living well so far as foodstuff are concerned’. *South Coast Times*, 28 September 1917

³³ Numerous well attended free entertainment such as the concert and comic song competition held at the Princess Theatre at Woonona on Monday 3 September 1917 which was organised by the strike committee. *South Coast Times*, September 1917.

³⁴ For example, daily processions through Helensburgh were abandoned on some days because many families were on the coast fishing and camping. *South Coast Times*, 14 September 1917.

³⁵ Robson, “The Origins and Character of the First AIF, 1914-18”, *Historical Studies*, p.738.

³⁶ Numbers are a percentage of total enlistment sample for both Illawarra and Robson

proximity of the Illawarra to Sydney recruiting depots may account for the higher enlistment percentages in the earlier part of the war. Men who were known to have been living in the Illawarra also signed their attestation papers at places further afield, such as Bathurst and Orange, which could suggest that their final and successful attempt at enlisting was not their first. The lower percentages of Illawarra enlistments in the September 1916 to November 1918 period suggest that region had been bled dry of fit men by this time. Michael McKernan notes the much lower levels of enlistment in country areas, particularly in 1917 and 1918 when he suggests there were 'few real men available, men whose circumstances allowed them to enlist',³⁷ which appears to be the situation in the Illawarra. This is reinforced by numerous newspaper reports detailing the numbers presenting for service who were rejected, and appears to have begun well before Robson's third period. As has already been noted, the percentage of the Illawarra population to enlist was greater than either the New South Wales or national figures.

The peak month for enlistments from the Illawarra was January 1916. Scott attributes the rise in AIF enlistments from 9 119 in December 1915 to 22 101 in January 1916 in Australia to the 'Call to Arms' issued by the prime minister in December 1915.³⁸ However the peak recorded in the Illawarra was proportionally greater than that for both New South Wales and the AIF and followed on from a more sustained level for the region in December 1915. This had been the month that the Waratah march had moved through the Illawarra, which although not bringing forth numbers of volunteers anywhere near the January 1916 figures could none the less have inspired some of those January volunteers.

³⁷ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, p. 190.

³⁸ Scott, *op cit*, p. 313.

Age

The ages of the Illawarra volunteers are similar to those of the AIF. The slightly higher number of men in their twenties could be a reflection of the age of the men attracted to the some parts of the region for employment in mines and industry.

Table 3
Age of volunteers Illawarra and AIF

Age	Illawarra ¹ %	AIF %
18-19	13	14
20-24	40	38
25-29	24	21
30-34	12	12
35-39	7	8
40+	4	7

¹ Calculated from the known ages of 1462 volunteers

One of the youngest known Illawarra youths to volunteer was Robert Meredith,³⁹ who enlisted under the surname of Falconer when aged just 15 years and 11 months. Born in Belfast, Ireland, Meredith had arrived in Australia as a boy, attended Corrimal Public School and had undergone compulsory military training. His use of a false name suggests that he enlisted without parental knowledge or permission, which is reinforced by his mother describing his occupation as ‘just a schoolboy’ when she completed his Roll of Honour circular. Although he had arrived in England in October 1916 he spent the first half of 1917 in hospital with scabies. When he finally got to the front he was killed in action just weeks later.⁴⁰

Robert Haylock Owen⁴¹ and Thomas Kennedy Irwin⁴² were at the opposite end of the age scale. As a commanding officer Owen’s 52 years put him at

³⁹ Pte 2178 Robert Lionel Meredith, 45 Bn, of Woonona, enlisted 21 February 1916, KIA 7 June 1917. Born Belfast, Ireland 1900.

⁴⁰ NAA B2455 Robert Lionel Falconer (Meredith).

⁴¹ Lt-Col. Robert Haylock Owen, 3 Bn, married, retired army officer of Wollongong, appointed 20 August 1914, RTA 8 October 1915. Born Wollongong 7 January 1862. Died Barnstaple, Devon 5 April 1927.

⁴² Pte 1620 Thomas Kennedy Irwin, 2 Remounts, married, veterinary surgeon of Wollongong, enlisted 24 September 1915, RTA 29 April 1916.

the high end of the age scale of his peers, and at the age of 50 Irwin was accepted in the 2 Remounts, no doubt on account of his training as a veterinary surgeon.

With respect to age, Robson notes that the lowering of the age limit is reflected in the increased numbers of 18 and 19 year olds who enlisted in the July 1915 to August 1916 period.⁴³ A similar and slightly higher rate is evident in the Illawarra. At the other end of the age spectrum a similar increase occurred with the raising of the maximum age limit. However the relaxation of the lower limit and the corresponding rise in the Illawarra enlistments was mainly amongst new recruits. Twenty men who had previously been rejected enlisted in this period, but only four would have been affected by the lowered limit, thus factors other than age had prevented them from enlisting at their first attempt.⁴⁴

Marital Status

Table 4 gives a breakdown of the marital status of the Illawarra volunteers, the vast majority of whom were single, much like the AIF as a whole.

Table 4
Marital Status

	Illawarra % ¹	AIF %
Single	81	82
Married	18	16
Widowed	1	2

¹ Calculated from the known marital status of 1417 Illawarra volunteers

⁴³ Robson, "The Origins and Character of the First AIF", *Historical Studies*, p. 743.

⁴⁴ During 1915 the *Illawarra Mercury* published lists of volunteers and also men who had been rejected. One such list published on 13 July 1915 gives the names of 41 men who had been rejected. Of these rejects, 20 enlisted within the time frame of July 1915 to August 1916, but only one 18 year old, one 19 year old and two 20 year old men were part of this twenty.

Ethnic Origin

Indications given from data collected suggests that the number of recently arrived men with no family ties in Australia will be quite high. It is most likely that a large percentage of men whose backgrounds have yet to be established will fall into this category. Without a connection with a family, sporting or other locally established network there is a lack of information available from local contemporary sources, which would normally aid in establishing the identity of an individual.

Despite the difficulties in establishing the number of newly arrived volunteers, it is known that Illawarra enlistees came from further afield than Australia and the United Kingdom. Other nations were represented by Illawarra volunteers, including New Zealander Paturea Pinehea,⁴⁵ Russian Hypolit Brynkeveh,⁴⁶ Dane Jens Jensen,⁴⁷ Canadian Leslie Allen⁴⁸ and Luther Stephens⁴⁹ from the United States of America. Some men of German descent enlisted from the Illawarra. Brothers Henry and Vivian Ziems of Albion Park, who came from the most extensive and well known local German family, enlisted in the 12 Light Horse. Another branch of the Zeims family lived at Corrimal, both branches being well respected within the community and there is no evidence to suggest that the family was ostracised in any way during the war.

Religion

The religious affiliations of the Illawarra volunteers reveal the most striking difference from other statistics. A number of points stand out, the most obvious being the very poor response from Catholics within the region.

⁴⁵ Pte 3857 Patruhea Pineaha, 20 Bn, single, labourer of Port Kembla and Hastings, NZ, enlisted 11 November 1915, KIA 5 May 1916 aged c28 years.

⁴⁶ Pte 2385 Hypolit Brynkeveh, 45 Bn, single, cotton worker of Corrimal and Russia, enlisted 27 March 1916, RTA 2 June 1919.

⁴⁷ Pte 2723 Jens Peter Jensen, 7 Field Coy Engineers, single, carpenter of Coledale and Denmark, enlisted 2 September 1915, RTA 4 May 1917.

⁴⁸ Pte 5974 Leslie John Allen, 13 Bn, single, labourer of Kiama and Manitoba, Canada, enlisted 6 March 1916. KIA 11 April 1917 aged 26 years.

⁴⁹ Pte 3468 Luther Roy Stephens, 53 Bn, single, navy of Thirroul and Tennessee USA, enlisted 13 January 1917, RTA 10 September 1919.

Table 5 shows that the Catholic representation amongst the Illawarra volunteers is proportionally less than that for the regional population. Presbyterian adherents exceeded the 1901 Illawarra percentages, and the Congregationalists and those belonging to the Church of England were more or less in step with their regional proportions. Although Congregationalists do not appear as a separate entity in AIF statistics, they were a significant minority in the Illawarra. In 1901 two localities in the Illawarra, Gerringong and Wollongong, had the second and third highest concentration of Congregationalists in New South Wales.⁵⁰

Table 5
Religious Affiliations of Volunteers⁵¹
Percentage of total for each category

Religion	Illawarra Volunteers ¹	Illawarra 1901 ²	NSW 1901 ²	AIF	Yackandandah Volunteers ³
Church of England	47.2	40.1	46.0	46.6	45
Roman Catholic	16.9	26.0	25.6	19.7	26
Methodist	12.9	14.8	10.2	10.6	
Presbyterian	19.0	11.3	9.8	13.5	20
Congregational	2.7	3.0	1.8	-	
Other Protestant	1.2	1.3	4.5	4.4	
Other/Unknown	1.0	2.1	3.0	5.3	

¹ Calculated from the known religion of 1601 Illawarra volunteers

² Calculated from Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1901.

³ John McQuilton

No reason for the poor response by Catholics has become apparent. An examination of monthly enlistments by religion shows no significant Catholic deviation in response to the Easter 1916 uprising. Catholics enlisted in patterns which followed the total enlistment response, there were just less of them. Although no obvious reason stands out for the lower level of Catholic participation, there is one possible link between religion and occupation that may explain Catholic participation to some extent. Early

⁵⁰ Calculated from 1901 Census figures. Ulladulla was home to the highest percentage of Congregationalists.

⁵¹ Fifty-four of the 1 598 men whose religion is stated on AWM 8 have also been identified with another religious affiliation, usually from their listing on a church memorial. Substituting the alternate religions would give a slight increase in Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational percentages with a corresponding decrease in the number of Church of England adherents. Roman Catholic numbers would remain the same.

settlement in the Illawarra saw a concentration of Catholics, many of them former convicts, in the Dapto region⁵² who remained and greatly extended their family networks into the twentieth century. A high proportion of these families also became farmers, an occupational category itself having a lower response than other occupational groups. It should be also noted that a high proportion of Catholics were also present in Northern Illawarra during the mid 1800s, but these were predominantly free settlers with a high proportion of mechanics and artificers.⁵³ Thus part of the reason for the lower number of Catholic enlistments could be attributed to their high concentration in an occupation with a poor general response.

Enlistment by locality

When the percentage of the population to enlist is viewed by locality, as is shown in Table 6, some extreme variations are apparent. The rate of enlistment in the different localities shows some startling differences. Farming communities were the least responsive in answering the call, as were the more militant unionised mining villages of Scarborough/Clifton and Coledale.

The high proportion of the population that enlisted from Thirroul has a probable cause in the expansion of railway works for line duplication and a camp for workers which was established during the war. This brought many workers to the locality, which would have raised the male population above the level of the overall increase that would have occurred since 1911. However, various newspaper reports throughout the war indicate that Thirroul residents were also strong in their support for the war. After the war Thirroul was the first Illawarra community to erect a monument to their volunteers. There was also a railway camp at Helensburgh, but that had

⁵² Henderson and Henderson, *Early Illawarra*, p.27.

⁵³ *ibid*, p. 41.

been in existence for some time by the outbreak of war.⁵⁴ The low response from Coledale is not surprising given that this mining village was closely associated with the anti-war Industrial Workers of the World.

Table 6
Enlistment by locality as a percentage of total population

Locality	Type of Community	Percentage of total population
Helensburgh	Mining	10
Scarborough/Clifton	Mining	11
Coledale	Mining	4
Austinmer	Mining	12
Thirroul	Mining/commercial	19
Bulli	Mining	6
Woonona	Mining	8
Corrimal	Mining/commercial	8
Balgownie	Mining	12
Wollongong	Commercial	9
Keiraville	Mining	6
Unanderra/Figtree	Farming	7
Mount Kembla	Mining/farming	4
Port Kembla	Industrial	7
Dapto	Farming	8
Shellharbour	Farming	5
Albion Park	Farming	16
Jamberoo	Farming	2
Kiama	Farming	6
Gerringong	Farming	14

In the southern localities the high figures for Gerringong and Albion Park, where enlistment in light horse units was common, may reflect the strength of the local mounted militia units that had proliferated before the war. It also seems likely that of the volunteers enlisting in Shellharbour and Jamberoo many could have actually come from the census region for Albion Park, the proximity to the former making it easier to enlist there rather than

⁵⁴ The Helensburgh to Waterfall deviation was opened on 27 February 1914, but further deviation works continued in the vicinity of Helensburgh after this. Southern, *A Railway History of the Illawarra*, p. 6.

at Albion Park. The same situation is also likely to hold true for Gerringong and Kiama.

Farms in the southern parts of the Illawarra were usually dairy farms, and were generally family owned and run. There was often no necessity to hire outside labour as a sufficient labour force was already in residence. If too many sons were available they would then need to find employment elsewhere, and with little in the way of industry existing in this part of the region the local council often filled this void. Employment records for the local council in Gerringong during the early years of this century list many local men amongst their employees.⁵⁵ Unlike Thirroul, there were few opportunities to attract men looking for work to the area, and those that were working on family farms were needed there. This situation meant that the number of potential volunteers was far below that available in other parts of the Illawarra where wage workers were more likely to reside.

Occupations

Perhaps the most difficult category of all to classify and compare is that which pertains to the occupations of volunteers. Archaic occupation titles and classification decisions aside, the nuances of regional economies can make comparisons difficult in that some regions did not support the same areas of employment. This was the case in John McQuilton's study of Yackandandah Shire and for this reason occupational comparisons were not made by him with AIF figures. With more urban and industrial activity the Illawarra region supports a range of occupations more in line with Robson's analysis of the AIF, yet it still shares many similarities with Yackandandah Shire. Both areas had a much higher percentage of miners who were generally unskilled workers and when added to the numbers of labourers gives a roughly equal percentage of unskilled workers in each region.

⁵⁵ Information supplied by John Graham of the Gerringong Historical Society, taken from Gerringong Council Records.

Given the differing categories used by Robson⁵⁶ and McQuilton⁵⁷ it is not possible to compare Illawarra with both at once although by classifying Illawarra volunteers according to both sets of occupational categories separate comparisons are able to be made.

The most striking difference between the Illawarra and the AIF is in the number of miners who enlisted. Also significant is the percentage of industrial workers and those engaged in primary production which are both approximately half of the national percentage. This clearly shows the significance that coal mining had achieved in the economic structure of the region by World War I. But coal mining was also essential to the war effort, as were the newly established metal based-industries of Port Kembla and the railway which provided the link for transporting their products. It was inevitable that a certain number of men who worked in these industries would not be enlisting, therefore the level of miners, industry workers and labourers could have been even higher.

Table 7
Occupations Illawarra:AIF

Occupation	Illawarra % ¹	Robson %
Labourer	24	22
Miner	32	4
Clerk	5	5
Industry	9	20
Primary	9	17
Commerce	7	12
Transport	7	9
Professional	3	5
Domestic	0	2
Army	0	1
Other	3	2
Unknown	0	1

¹ Calculated from the occupations of 1269 Illawarra volunteers as stated on embarkation rolls (AWM 8)

⁵⁶ Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First AIF", *Historical Studies*, p.745.

⁵⁷ McQuilton, *op cit*, p.4.

Table 8
Occupations Illawarra:Yackandandah Shire

Occupation	Illawarra %	McQuilton %
Unskilled labourers	25	42
Miners	32	10
Semi-skilled	9	8
Tradesmen	14	5
Commercial	8	4
Professional	4	7
Farmers	6	23
Other	2	1

At 57 per cent and 52 per cent respectively both the Illawarra and Yackandandah Shire appear to have had a higher representation of unskilled workers than the AIF amongst their volunteers.⁵⁸ The major difference between the occupational characteristics of the Illawarra and Yackandandah volunteers from the other categories is a reflection of the regional economies at the time. By World War I the Illawarra's industrial development had begun in Port Kembla with the town of Wollongong becoming increasingly urbanised as the commercial centre of the region whereas Yackandandah's economy was dominated by farming.⁵⁹

Territorial aspects of death

From the very beginning the AIF was created with volunteers from each state allocated to units associated with those states.⁶⁰ Although not strictly adhered to, the territorial nature of the composition of the AIF had significant consequences for volunteers. For the new enlistee being allotted to a unit with friends and even relatives undoubtedly eased the transition into military life. But a volunteer's place of residence had a considerable

⁵⁸ These represent the combined percentages of unskilled labourers and miners, the latter being predominantly an unskilled occupation.

⁵⁹ Before the establishment of coal mines in the Illawarra region in the mid 1800s the region had been dominated by primary production, but mining and a rail connection to Sydney in the 1880s had brought about a significant change to the regional economy and had also caused a substantial increase in the casual workforce. Yackandandah had developed in almost a reverse pattern with gold mining bringing an initial flood of residents and casual workers but had settled into a more established farming region by World War I.

bearing on which unit they were allocated to, which in turn became a significant determining factor in the probability of life or death on the battlefield depending on the combat patterns that the unit was involved in.

As units were raised a few eventually became closely identified with the Illawarra. Some units were particularly heavy with Illawarra men. With 154 enlistments the 13 Battalion had the highest concentration of Illawarra enlistments, with 38 of these men embarking with the 20 Reinforcements. Of the total 154 in this unit, the majority were from the northern Illawarra.

Further battalions often had close links with existing units. The creation of new battalions in early 1916 involved splitting existing units to form an experienced core for new battalions. A good example in the Illawarra is the 13/45 relationship. When the 45 Battalion was raised in early 1916, two companies of the 13 Battalion formed the basis of the 45 Battalion.⁶¹ From then on many men who embarked with the 13 Battalion were transferred to the 'sister' 45 Battalion. This re-allocation of men may have helped to prevent the total slaughter of men from one area when a particular unit was involved in a heavy battle, but in the case of the 13 and 45 Battalions the Illawarra men in these units were still predominantly from the northern suburbs of Wollongong.⁶² Seventy five men were allocated to the 45 Battalion. When this number is combined with enlistments in the 13 Battalion, a total of 229 men, or almost ten per cent of all Illawarra volunteers were attached to these units. Table 9 shows heavy concentration of Illawarra men in these, and other infantry battalions with high casualties which contributed to the higher death rate for the region.

⁶⁰ Bean, *Official History*, Vol. 1, p. 37.

⁶¹ Lee, *The Chronicle of the 45th Battalion*, pp. 10-11.

⁶² Of the Illawarra enlistments in the 13 Bn 78.6% were from Wollongong central and north. For the 45 Bn the figure is 56.6%.

Table 9
Death rate of Illawarra volunteers in units with more than 20 Illawarra
Enlistments

Unit	Illawarra Enlistments	Illawarra Deaths	Percentage of deaths
30 Bn	58	21	36
18 Bn	79	28	35
3 Bn	115	40	39
35 Bn	28	9	32
2 Bn	79	25	32
13 Bn	154	48	31
19 Bn	63	19	30
1 Bn	127	38	30
36 Bn	25	7	28
4 Bn	99	27	27
53 Bn	26	7	27
45 Bn	75	20	27
17 Bn	69	17	25
12 LH	20	4	20
20 Bn	86	17	20
1 LH	21	4	19
6 LH	38	3	8
1 FAB	28	2	7
1 Pioneers	20	1	5
7 LH	21	1	5
Mining Corps	69	3	4
NMEF 1 Bn	23	0	0

One quarter of the deaths of Illawarra volunteers in the 18 Battalion were the result of one battle, the assault on Hill 60 in August 1915.⁶³ Six of these seven men were from northern suburbs mining villages. Twelve of the forty deaths of 3 Battalion volunteers occurred at Lone Pine, with nine of these

⁶³ Four were killed in action and three died of their wounds. See Bean, *Official History*, Vol. II, pp. 718-762 for an account of this battle.

men from Wollongong and the northern villages.⁶⁴ The Illawarra deaths in the 13 Battalion were heaviest in August 1916 when 11 men were killed at Pozieres, seven of whom were also from northern mining centres.

In contrast, the highest concentration of enlistments from southern Illawarra was in the 6 Light Horse with 38 enlistments, of whom 58 per cent were from localities south of central Wollongong. The majority of Illawarra Light Horse enlistments were in this unit, including its commander Lieutenant Colonel Colin Dunmore Fuller DSO.⁶⁵ In comparison with infantry units the casualties in the 6 Light Horse were exceptionally low. Only 134 deaths were recorded over five years of active service for the whole of the 6 Light Horse (5 Illawarra deaths). Sixteen members of the unit were taken prisoners of war including one Illawarra man, Lance Corporal Archibald Hewitson.⁶⁶

When comparing the enlistment/death ratios of the infantry and light horse units with their corresponding units with the highest Illawarra enlistments, the 13 Battalion and 6 Light Horse, the relationship between place of residence and chance of survival becomes glaringly apparent. So too does the social status of the enlistees. The northern suburbs volunteers of the 13 Battalion, judged by their stated occupation, were generally wage workers with 62 per cent miners or labourers and the majority of the remainder wage workers of varying skill levels. In contrast, 33 per cent of the southern Lighthorsemen⁶⁷ were farmers working on, or running, family owned properties. With 31 per cent of 13 Battalion killed or dying as a result of injuries or illness compared with 8 per cent of the 6 Light Horse, a

⁶⁴ Another eight Illawarra volunteers of the 3 Bn had died on the Gallipoli peninsula prior to Lone Pine.

⁶⁵ Lieutenant-Colonel Colin Dunmore Fuller, 6 Light Horse, single, farmer of Dunmore, enlisted 7 October 1914, RTA 27 June 1919. Born 10 February 1882, died Sydney 19 September 1953.

⁶⁶ Lance Corporal 948 Archibald Richmond Hewitson, 6 LH, married, fletcher of Albion Park, enlisted 20 January 1915, RTA 25 December 1918.

⁶⁷ The farmers in the 6 LH are men who owned or worked on their own family dairy farms. There was also one farm labourer in the 6 LH, but he has not been included in this percentage.

volunteer's socio-economic standing, which substantially influenced their place of residence, was in part responsible for their chances of survival.

Despite the large number of miners who enlisted, tunnelling units were not the main recipients of Illawarra men. Had they been the death rate for the northern suburbs volunteers would have been considerably lower as the death rate for Illawarra volunteers in mining corps was only 4.3 per cent.⁶⁸

When all Illawarra enlistments and deaths are taken into consideration the death rate for the region was 19.7 per cent, which like the 21 per cent of Yackandandah shire enlistees who died, was well above the 14 per cent of the AIF.⁶⁹

The Waratahs

During late 1915 and early 1916, a number of recruiting marches originating in country New South Wales attempted to raise enthusiasm and the number of volunteers. The first such march in New South Wales began at Gilgandra in October 1915 and other parts of the state quickly began organising marches of their own. The Waratah march passed through the Illawarra in December 1915 having started in Nowra on 30 November and arrived in Sydney on 17 December 1915.

Identifying the Waratahs is a difficult process in itself as there is no 'list' of the marchers and newspapers did not always name the men who enlisted along the way. The author of *The Waratahs*, Alan Clark, has identified 84 men as almost certainly being Waratah marchers, with 38 of these coming from the Illawarra section of the march. Thirty one Illawarra Waratahs embarked on the *Makarini* as reinforcements for the 1 Battalion. Another 28 Illawarra men were aboard the *Makarini*, but had enlisted after the Waratahs

⁶⁸ Sixty six men were known to have served in mining corps, of these only three died, all from wounds.

⁶⁹ The Illawarra percentage is calculated from all enlistments from the region. The percentage of deaths in the AIF was approximately 14 per cent of all enlistments and 19 per cent of the members of the AIF who embarked for overseas service. Various figures exist regarding the total number of AIF enlistments and casualties. See Gammage, *op cit*, p. 283

passed through the region and were members of the reinforcements for the 2, 3 and 4 Battalions who were also on board the same transport.

Fifteen of the thirty one Illawarra Waratahs who embarked on the *Makarini* were either killed in action or died of wounds, a death rate far above both that for the AIF and the Illawarra. The Illawarra Waratahs also appear to have had a penchant for disobeying rules. Seventeen of the 84 Waratahs identified by Clark were charged with committing various offences, with a disproportionate 12 of these coming from the Illawarra region.⁷⁰

When examined statistically as a sub-group of the Illawarra volunteers, the Waratahs exhibit some different characteristics to both the total Illawarra enlistments and the AIF. At the same time as the Waratahs were marching from Nowra to Sydney the Kangaroos were undertaking a similar march from Wagga Wagga to Sydney and it is possible to also compare the two sets in some respects. For both the Waratahs and the Kangaroos the most startling difference from the AIF occurs with religion (Table 10). In comparison with the general population the Waratahs and Kangaroos were over-represented respectively by Church of England adherents and Catholics. This undoubtedly has some basis in regional variations. Les Hetherington notes that the Riverina had a higher proportion of Catholics in the general population, but not as high as the Kangaroos' 39 per cent.⁷¹ The high number of Church of England volunteers in the Illawarra appears to be at the expense of the other Protestant churches who comprised only 17 per cent of Waratah enlistments compared with 35 per cent for all of the Illawarra.

⁷⁰ The most common offence committed by the Illawarra Waratahs was being absent without leave and some were persistent repeat offenders, one man being charged with this offence at least eight times and another five times. Another man was charged with desertion in the field from 21 September 1918 to 16 October 1918, and another court martialled for disobeying a superior officer.

⁷¹ Hetherington, *op cit*, p. 22.

Table 10
Waratahs: Religion
Percentage of affiliation to each religion

	Waratahs	Kangaroos ¹	AIF	Illawarra
Roman Catholic	19	39	20	17
Church of England	64	48	47	47
Other Protestant	17	12	29	35
Other/Unknown	0	1	5	1

1.Hetherington, 'The Kangaroos March', *JAWM*, 26, p.21.

With regard to the occupational base of the Waratahs and Kangaroos, Table 11 shows that it is clear that groups of marchers were predominantly from the working class, with a high proportion of unskilled workers, especially among the Waratahs. The mobility of these types of workers was not constrained by the trappings of wealth.

Table 11
Waratahs: Occupations
Percentage of each occupation

	Waratahs	Kangaroos ¹	AIF	Illawarra
Labourers	53	48	22	24
Industry/Trade	0	21	20	9
Primary Industry	36	10	21	41
Transport	6	13	9	7
Commerce	3	3	12	7
Professional/Clerks	0	3	10	8
Other/Unknown	0	2	10	3

1.Hetherington, 'The Kangaroos March', *JAWM*, 26, p.21.

No professional or clerical workers were amongst the Illawarra Waratahs, and Table 12 shows that their age was even more concentrated in the 20-24 year group than the Kangaroos, the AIF or the Illawarra.

Table 12
Waratahs: age at enlistment
Percentage for each age group

	Waratahs	Kangaroos ¹	AIF	Illawarra
18-19	11	16	14	13
20-24	49	37	38	40
25-29	20	28	21	24
30-34	11	10	12	12
35-39	6	4	8	7
40 +	3	5	7	4

1.Hetherington, 'The Kangaroos March', *JAWM*, 26, p.21.

It appears that generally the men who joined these recruiting marches were often younger and less skilled than the average AIF volunteer, factors which perhaps made joining such a march an easier decision than for an older man with property and in a position of some responsibility.

Ernest Scott describes the snowball marches held in 1915/16 as having been effective,⁷² but is difficult to see either the Waratah or Kangaroo marches as such. For all the efforts made in each community which they passed through, the ensuing number of volunteers to come forward was very small given the large number of men who were able to volunteer in January 1916. Even more unsuccessful was the 'South Coast March to Freedom' which passed through the Illawarra in August 1918. Numerous photographs of the march at various places in the region show crowds watching the marchers, yet not one single volunteer from the Illawarra is known to have enlisted as a result of this march.

Conclusion

Generally the enlistment patterns of the Illawarra volunteers over the course of the war were similar to those at state and national level. Locally the differences in January 1916 and later in that year could be attributed to the influences of the Waratah march and the first major coal strike during the

⁷² Scott, *op cit*, p. 460.

war. The sustained lower level after 1916 indicates that there were fewer men available or willing to enlist, as overall the Illawarra contributed with a percentage of the population at a level similar to the AIF and New South Wales.

With respect to age and marital status the Illawarra volunteers were very similar to the AIF. The most pronounced differences are apparent in comparisons of religion and occupation. The Illawarra and Yackandandah Shire both exhibited distinct variations from the national characteristics of the AIF, which reinforces the importance of regional studies. The nature of the region in these respects had a significant bearing on these characteristics of the volunteers from each region. The variations in the characteristics of all Illawarra volunteers and the Waratah marchers reveal that even within a region significant differences can exist.

In a general summary, based on the majority in each examined category it could be said that the average Illawarra volunteer was Protestant, single, working in a coal mine or other unskilled occupation and had enlisted during the first half of the war. Had they also lived in a northern mining village they were likely to have been allocated to an infantry battalion with a higher rate of fatalities.

Michael McKernan has stated 'it is really very difficult either to find an accurate measure of the rate of enlistment in a particular area, or a standard by which to compare enlistment figures from different areas'.⁷³ The research for this chapter has confirmed this statement, but has also proven that it is not an impossible task.

⁷³ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, p. 187.

Chapter Three

“A glamorous adventure perhaps ...”⁷⁴

Motivations for Enlistment

Joining the rush to enlist at the outbreak of war were dozens of Illawarra men. New South Wales was to provide the first four battalions that made up the first brigade of infantry. The state was roughly divided into four geographical regions, each to be the principal source for a particular infantry battalion. As part of south-eastern New South Wales, Wollongong and the Illawarra were included in the area designated to the 3 Battalion. The region was heavily represented in this battalion, even the original commanding officer, Robert Haylock Owen, was from Wollongong. But with the Illawarra well serviced by rail to Sydney, volunteers from this region were far more well placed than potential volunteers from further afield, resulting in almost as many volunteers from the Illawarra being allocated to the 1, 2 and 4 battalions.⁷⁵ Mounted units were similarly territorial, with the 6 Light Horse the predominant ‘local’ regiment, which also had an Illawarra man, Colin Dunmore Fuller as commanding officer.

Few Illawarra volunteers have left any contemporary personal clues to their motivation for enlistment. Like the majority of the AIF they are likely to have joined up for a myriad reasons. Essentially the main reasons were personal and have been examined at length by historians such as Bill Gammage, Richard White, Alistair Thomson, Lloyd Robson and J Dawes.⁷⁶ At least one, but probably more, of the motivating forces examined by these authors such as adventure, a chance to travel, escape from domestic

⁷⁴ Edwards, *The Seventh Platoon*, p. 125.

⁷⁵ The first four battalions of the AIF all came from NSW, and were intended to be drawn from particular areas although this territorial allocation of recruits was not stringently followed. The 1 Battalion was allocated to western Sydney, the 2 Battalion to northern New South Wales, the 3 Battalion to the South Coast and western New South Wales and the 4 Battalion to eastern Sydney. Bean, *Official History*, Vol. I, p. 41.

⁷⁶ Gammage, *op cit*; White, *op cit*; Thomson, *op cit*; Dawes and Robson, *Citizen to Soldier*.

problems, could be reasonably expected to have applied to the majority of the Illawarra volunteers. To personal motivations could be added the more public motivations of patriotism and sense of duty, which although probably not the determinants in an individual's decision to enlist are far more likely to be found in contemporary records such as newspaper reports.

Irrespective of whether or not travel had been an incentive for enlistment in the first place, it was an inevitable experience for Australians travelling to the other side of the world. Unlike British troops on leave from the Western Front, there was no nearby family for the majority of Australians to visit therefore furlough was their opportunity to be a tourist. Some, like Australian born William Richardson,⁷⁷ took the opportunity whilst on leave to visit their family homelands.

Richard White has argued that the major problem in identifying the motives for enlistment is that few men expressed their reasons before they enlisted. Most wrote only after they had already made the decision to enlist and their reasons that were committed to paper were therefore coloured by other factors, especially the knowledge of who may read their words. Having decided to enlist men could attribute their decision to nobler reasons than those which may have originally influenced them. A man who had enlisted for fear of being called a coward would hardly have said as much, it would have been far more likely that he would give another, and perhaps patriotic, reason commonly veiled under the vernacular as 'doing my bit'.

Although Illawarra volunteers did not recorded their reasons for enlisting at the time, some recorded their thoughts at a later stage. Interviewed in his twilight years, coal miner Roy Coltman⁷⁸ did not give a particular reason for his own decision to enlist, other than he had to wait until the barrier of the

⁷⁷ Capt. William James Reid Richardson, 1 Bn, married, shire clerk of Bulli. Enlisted 1914, RTA 13 February 1917.

⁷⁸ References to Roy Coltman in AWM 8 and AWM 133 have not been located. It is possible that he did not serve overseas.

need for parental consent was removed for 18 year olds.⁷⁹ Referring to other young miners he says ‘They put their ages up and they thought they were going for a party, but they got killed. A lot of them got killed. We lost a lot of good boys that worked in the mines’.⁸⁰ Albert Edwards⁸¹ recalled that ‘one of my childish absurdities (I shall not call it an ambition) was to dream of decorations for bravery in the field with the Gordon Highlanders’,⁸² however when war was declared he did not enlist immediately. It was nine months into the war when he and his three room-mates ‘searched and failed to find any good reasons why they should not join in the trek overseas’.⁸³ Boredom is likely to have helped them come to this decision. For four young men living and working in Canberra away from their families, and with little to do in their spare time, enlisting in the AIF would give them temporary respite from their careers and the lack of available recreational activities at the time.

Edwards kept a detailed diary which he wrote up as a book shortly after his arrival home. Whilst the subject matter covers all aspects of his war experience, 34 of the 161 pages of this manuscript are devoted to his experiences as a tourist during the few months before his repatriation to Australia.⁸⁴ Edwards’ prime motive to enlist was not to travel, but it became an important enough part of his war experience to warrant the amount of description in his memoirs. He had taken the opportunity to travel when it was available and perhaps devotes so much to this part of his time away as a leveling measure against his preceding text on the more depressing aspects of war.

However, there is one further aspect of a possible motivation to enlist, that of mateship, which is quite pronounced and is to a reasonable extent

⁷⁹ The need for parental consent for 18 to 21 year olds was removed on 6 May 1918.

⁸⁰ Moore, Gorman and Harrison (eds), *At The Coalface*, p. 21. Roy Coltman was interviewed on 22 February 1988.

⁸¹ Lt Albert Edwards, 1 Bn, single, civil servant of Canberra and Balgownie, enlisted 2 December 1915. Born Mt Keira 1 August 1890, died Canberra 28 November 1969.

⁸² Edwards, *op cit*, p. 4.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 127-161.

identifiable from official records. The incidence of mates enlisting together from the Illawarra was a very common occurrence. Close examination of the AIF Unit Embarkation Rolls (AWM 8) shows that men from the Illawarra usually did not enlist alone. Generally, a new recruit was allotted to either a company within a unit, or a reinforcement to a unit. During the course of scanning the embarkation rolls for Illawarra addresses it became increasingly apparent that if one Illawarra volunteer was found within a company or reinforcement, then there was a strong probability that another would be found within the same group. Almost invariably the men would be of approximately the same age, come from the same or neighbouring localities and the enlistment dates would be the same or very close. When the age, occupation and enlistment dates of all Illawarra volunteers are taken into consideration this aspect of 'mateship' is further reinforced. Taking February 1915 as an example: Jack Owens and Thomas Woods, miners in their twenties from Helensburgh enlisted on 2 February;⁸⁵ Walter Welsh and Edward Tregoning, miners aged 19 and 22 from Woonona and Bulli respectively enlisted on 10 February;⁸⁶ William Thrower, James Patterson, James Lillie, James McLean and Thomas Brown, all of Scarborough (with the last four being Scottish miners in their twenties) enlisted on 13 February;⁸⁷ Alexander McFarlane, William Stewart and Meredith Williams

⁸⁵ Pte 294 Jack Owens, 18 Bn, A Company, single, miner of Helensburgh, enlisted 2 February 1915 aged 29 years; Pte Thomas Woods, 17 Bn, C Company, single, miner of Helensburgh North, enlisted 2 February 1915, KIA 21 September 1915 aged 23 years.

⁸⁶ Pte 1307 Walter Sealy Joseph Welsh, 18 Bn, D Company, single, miner of Bulli, enlisted 10 February 1915; Pte 1282 Edward Corin Tregoning, 18 Bn, D Company, single, miner of Woonona, enlisted 10 February 1915, RTA 17 March 1917.

⁸⁷ Pte 999 William Thrower, 18 Bn, single, KIA 22 August 1915; Pte 961 James White Paterson, 18 Bn, C Company, single, miner of Scarborough, enlisted 13 February 1915 aged 25 years, NOK of West Glasgow, Scotland; Pte 904 James Lillie, 18 Bn, C Company, single, miner of Scarborough, enlisted 13 February 1915 aged 25 years, DOW 30 August 1915 aged 32 years, NOK of Bathgate, Scotland; Pte 913 James McLean, 18 Bn, C Company, single, miner of Scarborough, enlisted 13 February 1915 aged 24 years, NOK of Wishaw, Scotland; Sgt 814 Thomas Brown, 18 Bn, C Company, single, miner of Scarborough, enlisted 13 February 1915, RTA 23 March 1919, NOK of South Lanarkshire, Scotland.

from Scarborough and Helensburgh enlisted on 16 February;⁸⁸ Charles Craig and Andrew Freebairn of Helensburgh enlisted on 17 February;⁸⁹ Eden Deering and Henry Day, both from Wentworth Street, Port Kembla, enlisted on 28 February 1915.⁹⁰ Similar patterns occur for each month throughout the war.

Attempts to raise complete local companies appear to have been made by recruiting committees. This would have served the purposes of recruiting committees well, but required large numbers of men to enlist together but the Illawarra simply did not have the population to support mass enlistments. At times significant numbers of Illawarra men did enlist over short periods of time from a single locality indicating that peer pressure was also playing a role in the recruitment process. At least seventeen Balgownie men enlisted in August 1915, the majority of them being allocated to the 12 reinforcements of the 13 Battalion. The largest single concentration of Illawarra men with 33 local volunteers were also assigned to a reinforcement of the 13 Battalion, this time the 20 reinforcements. This was the closest attempt to form an Illawarra company, either intentionally or otherwise, with the men from this reinforcement enlisting from early March until late April 1916.

Although mates were far more likely to enlist together than siblings and father and sons, numerous members of nuclear families did enlist from the Illawarra. By gathering genealogical information on the volunteers it has been possible to identify family groups. From the 107 family groups

⁸⁸ Pte 1255 Alexander McFarlane, 53 Bn, of Scarborough, enlisted 16 February 1915; Pte 1265 William Peter Stewart, single, miner of Helensburgh, enlisted 16 February 1915. KIA 5 September 1915 aged 29 years; Pte 1311 Meredith Williams, 53 Bn, of Scarborough, enlisted 16 February 1915.

⁸⁹ Pte 1050 Charles Harper Craig, 17 Bn, C Company, single, miner of Helensburgh, enlisted 17 February 1915 aged 28 years; Pte 1052 Andrew Freebairn, 17 Bn, C Company, single, miner of Helensburgh, enlisted 17 February 1915 aged 24 years.

⁹⁰ Pte 1185 Eden Fred Charles Deering, 17 Bn, single, labourer of Port Kembla, enlisted 28 February 1915 aged 35 years; Pte 405 Henry James Day, 20 Bn, single, labourer of Port Kembla, enlisted 28 February 1915 aged 30 years, RTA 18 January 1919.

positively identified at this point⁹¹ it is possible to examine some aspects of family enlistments. Two or more brothers from the same family group was the most common type of multiple family enlistment, occurring in 98 of 107 families.⁹² One brother and sister enlisted and in six families a father and one or more sons enlisted. In the remaining two families the volunteers were groups of three, in each case two brothers with a son of one of the older men.

The Fletcher family of Bulli sent the most number of sons from a single family in the Illawarra, although not all with their mother's blessing. Six of the eight boys⁹³ enlisted, but only four returned home. Abram Fletcher was born in 1899 and enlisted in October 1915 which also made him one of the youngest Illawarra volunteers. When he enlisted he didn't just put his age up a little, he stated that he was 21 years old,⁹⁴ a lie which would have prevented the need for him to obtain parental consent. It is also likely that he didn't go with the blessing of his family, for unlike his brothers he enlisted at Orange.

More than one son from some of the wealthier local families enlisted. Three of the Gorrell sons⁹⁵ of 'Sunnydale' Berkeley enlisted, all attached to the 1 Light Horse. From Gerringong Henry Gordon and George Malcolm Miller

⁹¹ The total number of families where more than one member enlisted is expected to be considerably higher as the majority of 107 used here are predominantly families where the enlistees were born in the Illawarra.

⁹² Of these 98 multiple sibling enlistments, 88 were of two brothers only, in nine families three brothers enlisted and in one case six brothers enlisted.

⁹³ Pte 2929 Abram Fletcher, 31 Bn, single, labourer of Bulli, born 1899, enlisted 18 October 1915, RTA 22 December 1918. Arthur H Fletcher (details uncertain). Pte 532 Donald McDonald Fletcher, 18 Bn, single, farmhand of Bulli, 27 February 1915, RTA 20 September 1917. Pte 542 Edgar N Fletcher, 20 Bn, single, miner of Woonona, enlisted 19 March 1915, RTA 17 March 1917. Pte 5499 John Burnett Fletcher, 13 Bn, married, miner of Woonona, enlisted 4 January 1916. KIA 29 August 1916 aged 31 years. William James Fletcher (details unknown, probably 3788 29 Bn)

⁹⁴ AWM 8 Unit Embarkation Rolls 31 Bn, 5 Reinforcements.

⁹⁵ Sgt 9587 James Kingsley Gorrell, 1 LH, single, bank officer of Berkeley, enlisted 18 July 1915. Born Unanderra 3 October 1891, died 6 June 1973. Pte 3538 John Westley Roy Gorrell, 1 LH, single, bank officer of Berkeley, enlisted 14 April 1917, RTA 18 February 1919. Born Unanderra 27 July 1897, died 3 September 1966. Pte 3624 Stanley William

volunteered, the latter enlisting on the same day as his cousin, Stanley George William Miller.⁹⁶ Like the Gorrells these three men were sons of wealthy farmers, and also joined the Light Horse. Two sons of the Figtree family, Edward Richardson, and F G Figtree enlisted. This family was one of Wollongong's wealthiest and not only sent these sons, but contributed constantly and generously with cash donations throughout the war. As one of the few car-owning families during the war they also made their vehicle available to transport ex-servicemen whenever required.⁹⁷

It appears that the AIF did little to separate siblings to enhance the chance of survival of at least one. In 21 of the 107 family groups (20 per cent) two family members enlisted on the same day or within a week of each other. Despite heavy losses at Gallipoli and on the Western Front at company and battalion level, in all but 3 instances they were assigned to the same company, or the same reinforcement to a unit.⁹⁸ Forty-five of the 107 families lost one family member and in six cases two were killed or died as a result of war. Few brothers appear to have volunteered in response to the death of their sibling already at the front. Only George Blackett, who enlisted seven weeks after his brother was killed,⁹⁹ Harold Kirby, who enlisted two weeks after his brother died,¹⁰⁰ and Victor Wells, who enlisted eight months after his brother Sydney was killed¹⁰¹ could be said to have

Gorrell, 1 LH, single, bank officer of Berkeley, enlisted 14 April 1917, RTA 13 March 1919. Born Unanderra 3 February 1895, died 18 September 1963

⁹⁶ Pte 1641 Henry Gordon Miller, 6 LH, single, farmer of Gerringong, enlisted 21 August 1915. Pte 3128 George Malcolm Miller, 6 LH, single, farmer of Gerringong, enlisted 11 September 1916, RTA 25 September 1919. Born Robertson. Pte 3127 Stanley George William Miller, 6 LH, married, farmer of Gerringong, enlisted 11 September 1916, RTA 16 March 1919.

⁹⁷ Newspaper reports throughout the war cite the donations and assistance given by the Figtree family.

⁹⁸ The three exceptions occurred before the AIF suffered heavy casualties on the Western Front although individual unit losses had been significant at Gallipoli.

⁹⁹ L/Cpl 1884 George Oswald Blackett, 20 Bn, single, miner of Scarborough, enlisted 21 June 1915 aged 19 years. Pte 1166 James Colville Blackett, 13 Bn, single, labourer of Scarborough, KIA 2 May 1915.

¹⁰⁰ Pte 1445 Harold Stewart Kirby, 34 Bn of Wollongong, enlisted 2 September 1916. QMS 508 Alban Harcourt Kirby, 1 Bn, single, salesman of Wollongong, enlisted 4 September 1914. KIA 19 August 1916 aged 23 years.

¹⁰¹ Pte 3748 Victor Albert Wells, 45 Bn, single, grocer of Bellambi, enlisted 23 March 1917 aged 24 years. Pte 1427 Sydney James Wells, 13 Bn, single, labourer of Bellambi, KIA 8 July 1916 aged 27 years.

possibly joined up with motives of retribution. In all other instances where a death in the family group occurred, the sibling or father had enlisted prior to the death.

When the term 'family' is extended to cousins, nephews and uncles, the numbers of related volunteers rapidly increases. When the *Illawarra Mercury* published news that Charles Buckeridge¹⁰² had been wounded at the Dardanelles it also mentioned that he had about twelve cousins and nephews on active service.¹⁰³ David Blyton¹⁰⁴ was one of as many as 30 members of his extended family to enlist.¹⁰⁵ Other Illawarra volunteers had family ties in the region reaching back to very start of white settlement. With large families and a lineage that had intermarried a number times since the original generation many volunteers were just one of a very large extended family whose lives were on the line.

Most father and son and sibling enlistments came from the ranks of the working class, but some did come from the wealthier families of the region. Father and son Robert Haylock Owen of Wollongong and Percy Irvine Owen of the Federated Malay States¹⁰⁶ both enlisted, with Percy coming to Australia specifically to do so. Robert Haylock Owen had been living in retirement in Wollongong at the outbreak of war, retired from the British Army. After being chosen to command the 3 Infantry Battalion of the AIF he found himself ready to embark in an Australian uniform for the first time since 1885 when he had been a member of the New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan.¹⁰⁷ For the first year of the war his son Percy was managing a

¹⁰² Pte 522 Charles Stanley Buckeridge, 3 Bn, single, carpenter of Wollongong, enlisted 26 August 1914, KIA 7 August 1915 aged 23 years.

¹⁰³ *Illawarra Mercury* 10 May 1915.

¹⁰⁴ Pte 2038a David Leighton Blyton, 18 Bn, labourer of Helensburgh. DOW 14 December 1917 aged 33 years.

¹⁰⁵ AWM 131 Roll of Honour Circular, David Leighton Blyton.

¹⁰⁶ 2/Lt Percy Irvine Haylock Owen, 3 and 58 Bns, single, plantation manager of Federated Malay States and Wollongong, KIA 23 September 1917 aged 26 years.

¹⁰⁷ Owen had been a lieutenant in A Company of the NSW Contingent to the Sudan 1885. After returning from Sudan, Owen went to England where he received a commission in the British Army. During the Boer War he was 1900 chief staff officer of the New Zealand Local Forces.

rubber plantation in the Federated Malay States but came to Australia towards the end of 1915. Although his father stated that his son came to Australia to enlist as a private, and Percy did enlist for service abroad on 8 November 1915, he did not immediately embark for the front. Whether by virtue of his family associations, social status or perhaps aptitude that was shown in camp, Percy was sent to the Officers' Training School at Duntroon, graduating in April 1916. He then attended trench warfare school at Liverpool eventually embarking overseas in November 1916 with the 58 Battalion. Before leaving England Percy was transferred to the 3 Battalion but spent only four months at the front before being killed in action.¹⁰⁸

Labourer James Baker of Bulli enlisted with one of his sons, two other sons had already joined up.¹⁰⁹ All three sons were miners as were Thomas Lithgow¹¹⁰ and Edward Hunter¹¹¹ who enlisted after their sons. Similarly employed John Souter¹¹² of Keiraville enlisted seven months before his son.

A number of prominent public figures enlisted from the region throughout the war. One first well known to enlist was the very popular Congregational minister, Charles Olver.¹¹³ Prior to the war Olver had been the most publicly visible clergyman in the Illawarra. His sermons were regularly reported in the press and his influence reached further than his own congregation in other ways. Olver had first suggested the first Union Church in the region which was eventually opened in 1917 with the support

¹⁰⁸ NAA B2455, Irvine Haylock Owen,

¹⁰⁹ Pte 6708 James William Baker, 13 Bn, married, labourer of Bulli, enlisted 22 August 1916, RTA 21 December 1917. Pte 6707 Ernest Joseph Baker, single, wheeler of Bulli, enlisted 17 August 1916, RTA 2 March 1919. Pte 6216 Herbert Thomas Baker, 13 Bn, single, miner of Bulli, enlisted 25 April 1916, RTA 1 April 1919. Pte 4449 James William Baker, 4 Bn, single, miner of Bulli, enlisted 27 September 1915, DOW 6 November 1916 aged 21 years.

¹¹⁰ Pte 6133 Thomas Lithgow, 20 Bn, married, miner of Balgownie, enlisted 5 August 1916, RTA 10 March 1918. Spr 3635 William John Henry Lithgow, Mining Corps, single, miner of Balgownie, enlisted 19 March 1916, RTA 16 June 1919.

¹¹¹ Spr 1419 Edward Hunter, 2 Tunnel Coy, married, miner of Woonona, enlisted 19 January 1916, RTA 18 January 1919. Pte 3567 Austin John Croft Hunter, 5 Pioneers, single, wheeler of Woonona, enlisted 13 October 1915, RTA 13 April 1919.

¹¹² Sgt 3474 John Forbes Souter, 1 Bn, married, miner of Keiraville, enlisted 24 July 1915, RTA 3 May 1917. Pte 5229 John Forbes Souter, 1 Bn, single, miner of Keiraville, enlisted 6 December 1915, RTA 12 July 1919.

of the Presbyterians and Methodists,¹¹⁴ and in 1914 it was Olver who had organised and publicised the local activities of the combined Protestant 'Go to Church' Sunday on 20 September 1914.¹¹⁵ Olver's patriotism was evident in many of his writings. When he publicly announced his imminent enlistment in June 1915 he was at pains to stress that it had been a carefully considered personal decision that had been influenced by his strong sense of duty.¹¹⁶ He enlisted on 14 July 1915 as a private. Old habits die hard for some men and even on leave before his departure Olver gave a sermon to his former congregation in Wollongong. Having spent time in camp he was able to integrate his observations and experiences into his usual patriotic speech. Olver spoke of the class leveling effect of the uniform which made all men, rich or poor in their previous life, equal as soldiers. He also told how he had asked men from where and why were they there, but there was no single reason. One man said he was there was for sport, another for the money, but Olver dismissed these reasons as insignificant, rather that men were there for a much more patriotic cause.

for throbbing throughout the camp was a magnetic note which indicated that the majority of men were not there for a love of sport or for a paltry 5s per day, but because in the heart of the cultured man and the worker was the feeling that the nation was up against it and the issue must be faced.¹¹⁷

Stirring stuff from a very popular preacher and a man who was perhaps the most prominent non-official recruiting officer in the region.

Other clergyman, although not as vocal or perhaps as freely quoted as Olver, did express their opinions on the war. The Reverend A C Stubbin of St Michael's Wollongong wrote his views directly to his parishioners in St Michael's Parish Paper:

¹¹³ Cpl 8092 Charles Sedgwick Olver, 2 AGH, married, clergyman of Wollongong. Born Preston, Victoria 1881.

¹¹⁴ Piggin, *op cit*, pp. 171-2.

¹¹⁵ *Illawarra Mercury*, 28 August 1914.

¹¹⁶ *Illawarra Mercury*, 29 June 1915.

¹¹⁷ *Illawarra Mercury*, 7 September 1915.

One feels that some of our young men are either blind to the need, or sadly lacking in patriotism to hold back from offering in the face of such pressing danger to our Empire. Surely our young men cannot read the papers or they would be so impressed with the outstanding facts . . . unless continued reinforcements are forthcoming their homes, mothers, and sisters are in danger of being treated in the same way as the Belgians have been treated.¹¹⁸

Reverend Stubbin also offered advice from a personal viewpoint to any men unsure of whether to enlist:

It may be that some of our young men are looking to their clergy for guidance in this matter. . . . I would also point to my son who has volunteered and I say there is my guidance to you. If I think it right for him to go I think it right for you.¹¹⁹

Three Protestant clergymen, Rev. Donald McKay Barnet (Presbyterian), Rev. E Weymouth (the Congregational successor of Charles Olver) and Rev. Frank Dewsbury (Methodist), were members of the Wollongong Recruiting Committee.¹²⁰ Three other Illawarra clergymen volunteered as chaplains. The Reverend Oswald Dent¹²¹ of Austinmer served one year as a chaplain with various units including the 30 battalion which may well have brought him into contact with some familiar faces. Dent was a Church of England minister as was Alfred Gallop of Kiama.¹²² Methodist Richard Finnigan¹²³ of Wollongong had been the first clergyman to enlist as a chaplain. Thus, the Illawarra was represented by clergymen from various Protestant churches, but no Catholics appear to have volunteered despite the need existing for clergy from a faith that had difficulty in convincing their priests to volunteer.¹²⁴

At least two prominent civic leaders enlisted for overseas service. Shortly before the beginning of the 1917 General Strike, the mayor of Wollongong,

¹¹⁸ *Illawarra Mercury*, 6 September 1915.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Piggin, *op cit*, p. 180.

¹²¹ Reverend Oswald Gordon Dent, married, Church of England clergyman of Austinmer. Born Stanmore 1885. Enlisted 20 August 1917.

¹²² Reverend Arthur Henry Gallop, single, Church of England clergyman of Kiama.

¹²³ Richard O'Donnell Finnigan, married, Methodist clergyman of Wollongong, enlisted 16 November 1915.

¹²⁴ McKernan, *Padre*, p. 2.

Norman Smith,¹²⁵ had enlisted and proceeded to Liverpool camp in the midst of the dispute. As mayor, Smith declined to allow council to be drawn into the politics of the strike,¹²⁶ which he considered to be outside the function of the council. There was a possibility that the strike could affect much of the community, but it did not stop Smith from abdicating a municipal responsibility. Boer War veteran and Bulli Shire Clerk William James Reid Richardson had enlisted early in the war seeing service at Gallipoli, but was wounded after only three weeks in France. Many of the serving aldermen were too old, but the names of their sons appear frequently in the list of Illawarra volunteers.

In October 1916 Illawarra miners participated in a strike which resulted in the granting of their demands for an eight hours 'bank to bank' shift and increased wages. Despite the lack of income that the strike generated Illawarra miners would have not seen AIF pay rates as an incentive in itself, especially given the improvements in wages and conditions achieved as a result of the strike. Even prior to these gains wages had been above what a private would receive in the AIF,¹²⁷ although coal mining was fraught with financial insecurity due to strikes and stoppages, and the ever-present danger of potential gas explosions. The security of a regular wage may well have been attractive to some, although no corresponding security of safety in employment was offered by the AIF. At the Electrolytic Refining & Smelting Company at Port Kembla the rates of pay for workers over 19 years of age exceeded those offered for a private in the AIF.¹²⁸ Even though the lowliest rank in the AIF were well paid in comparison to their British counterparts the incentive of 'six bob a day' could not be construed as a

¹²⁵ Pte 7024 Norman McLeod Smith, 19 Bn, single, railway clerk of Wollongong. Born Wollongong 1884.

¹²⁶ *Illawarra Mercury*, 24 August 1917. Report of council meeting held on 17 August 1917.

¹²⁷ For example, mining award wages gazetted in 1915 set a rate of 10/10 per shift. *Illawarra Mercury*, 14 May 1915.

¹²⁸ Award rates set for ER&S in 1914 by the wages board ranged from 7/6 per day for yard sweepers to 10/4 per day for skimmers. A complete listing of all categories is given in the *South Coast Times*, 17 July 1914.

major influence for a large number of Illawarra volunteers who were already paid in excess of that amount.

Many things may have influenced the decision to enlist but ultimately volunteers must be considered to be simply that – men who came forward of their own free will. Although often well attended, perhaps because they were often held in close proximity to the numerous local hotels, recruiting meetings frequently from 1915 onwards rarely inspired volunteers to come forward immediately. Even the recruiting officers were criticised. With many returned men unable to find work, young fit men were being paid £4 4s per week with a 10s daily expense allowance for work as recruiting officers. That this work could well have been done by a returned soldier was a point expressed by Captain Vowell in early January 1917 at a meeting to form a recruiting committee.¹²⁹ Recruiting meetings and the efforts of recruiting officers were not persuading men to enlist, but most significantly, the Waratah march, the region's biggest recruiting drive proved that all the pomp, ceremony and patriotic fervour that could be mustered could not inspire men to enlist.

Prior to the march recruiting committees and other regional representatives had planned the route, but the needs of the marchers whilst as they passed through each locality was the sole responsibility of the local committees. To this end almost every stopping point along the Waratah's route organised a committee to plan activities for the visit of the marchers to their locality. Parades, bands and banquets greeted the new recruits and gifts were freely given. As the purpose of the march was to recruit volunteers a meeting, usually followed by a concert, was held at each town and village visited along the way. At all points along the route recruits failed to come forward in substantial numbers. At the largest town along the route, Wollongong, the procession was estimated to have drawn a crowd of thousands.¹³⁰ Yet only

¹²⁹ *South Coast Times*, 12 January 1917.

¹³⁰ *Illawarra Mercury*, 7 December 1915.

eleven men came forward and half of these failed to pass the medical examination.¹³¹

In terms of the number of recruits who joined along the way, the Waratah march must be considered a failure. Despite an enormous amount of public support and displays of patriotism at all centres along the march, recruits simply failed to come forward in any substantial numbers. There are some factors which may have contributed to the poor response. The timing of the march, leaving Nowra on 30 November 1915 and arriving in Sydney on 17 December 1915, meant that men were being asked to leave their families and spend what may be their last Christmas in camp. Although eligible men had a few weeks notice of the impending march, the lead up to which was exceptionally well publicised in the Illawarra, it may well have not provided enough time for men to tidy up their personal affairs. The prospect of being under military control from the moment they joined the march may have also been a deterrent when others, having made the decision to enlist, spent their last few days before going to camp in the company of family and friends. For some, the march itself may have provided an opportunity to fulfil their personal patriotic sense of duty without actually enlisting. Whether or not this was the case for butcher William Lang who supplied all the meat for the marchers on their stays at Wollongong, Balgownie and Corrimal¹³² is not known, but 35 year old Lang never enlisted.

¹³¹ Clark, *The Waratahs*, p. 24.

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 23.



The Waratahs outside the Balgownie School of Arts¹³³

It is easy to speculate as to why these men did not enlist as part of the Waratah march but no substantial evidence is available. At least 55 Illawarra men enlisted between 2 and 15 December when the Waratahs were in the Illawarra. Occurring over twelve months after the outbreak of war, the impending arrival of the Waratahs created a patriotic fervour at a level equaling, if not exceeding, that which was exhibited by the Illawarra in August 1914. Incentives for volunteering for military service were not necessarily patriotic and some men enlisting for other reasons during December 1915 may have deliberately decided to distance themselves from the marchers. Political differences may have had some influence on deterring others. Politicians certainly saw a chance to address the electorate and espouse their views. George Burns MHR spoke at various points along the route, even joining the march for the leg from Wollongong to Balgownie.¹³⁴

However, the march may well have been the impetus for some men to enlist after Christmas. January 1916 had the highest monthly number of enlistments for any month during the war. Another reason for the increase

¹³³ Balgownie Centenary Committee, *Balgownie School Centenary 1889-1989*, p. 46.

¹³⁴ Clark, *op cit*, p. 24. Burns may have walked with the men on other legs of the march. He is noted by Clark as a speaker at meetings along the route held at Gerringong, Kiama, Jamberoo, Wollongong, Balgownie, Hurstville and Sydney.

in January enlistments, as already noted in the previous chapter, may have been as a result of the 'Call to Arms' issued along with a questionnaire to eligible men in December 1915. Ernest Scott and Lloyd Robson both allude to this call by the government as being responsible for a national increase in January 1916 enlistments.¹³⁵

Not needing any coercion to enlist were the first men from the region to depart for overseas service. Twenty one Illawarra men were members of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) commanded by Colonel W Holmes which left Sydney on 19 August 1914. After the return of this original ANMEF battalion from New Guinea, a number of Illawarra men who had been members of this unit re-enlisted. Faced with exacting physical criteria, the attestation papers of some of these men provide some evidence that the early volunteers, or the person recording their details, did in fact falsify their physical description. It is also pertinent to note that approximately half of the first set of attestation papers sighted for ANMEF members from the Illawarra do not give any physical description at all. The question then arises as to whether this was a deliberate omission, or perhaps not completed in the haste of the situation. With just eight days to ready for embarkation it is likely that a number of details were overlooked.

One of the ANMEF men who re-enlisted was Roy Dean.¹³⁶ The high physical standards set in August 1914 and the lack of attention to detail are responsible the differing height recorded in Dean's attestation papers. His first set of attestation papers dated 16 August 1914 give his height as five feet, seven inches. Having returned from service in New Guinea Dean, re-enlisted on 23 March 1915, but this time his height was recorded as only

¹³⁵ Scott, *op cit*, p. 313; Robson, *The First AIF*, p. 74.

¹³⁶ Private Royden Alvin Dean, ANMEF 1 Bn 970 and 4 Pioneer Bn 4077, tailor of Wollongong, enlisted (1) 11 August 1914, (2) 22 March 1915.

five feet, five inches tall with a chest measurement one inch less than it was on his first set of papers.

The earliest enlistment date recorded for an Illawarra volunteer was 10 August 1914.¹³⁷ Twenty three year old Arnold Kingsley Hosking¹³⁸ was not only extremely keen, but also more prepared than many other young men for what lay ahead. Although he had no actual battle experience, Hosking had spent much of his life preparing for this moment. Throughout his compulsory military training he had distinguished himself, as a corporal and colour sergeant in junior and senior cadets. In 1911 he travelled to London as one of 187 Coronation Cadets, after which he was promoted to lieutenant in the 37 Regiment, the Illawarra militia unit. With an early enlistment came an early embarkation with the ANMEF, but just two months after his discharge from that unit he had re-enlisted and was appointed to the rank of 2 Lieutenant in the 20 Battalion. After coming through his time at Gallipoli unscathed, Hosking was wounded in France in May 1916 during an action that earned him a Military Cross. For gallantry at Pozieres he was mentioned in despatches and four months later was awarded a bar to his MC for invaluable work on 24 and 25 February 1917 during an advance on Malt Trench.¹³⁹ In his last foray with the enemy on 20 September 1917 at Polygon Wood, which Bean described as a situation where ‘the fighting was sharp’,¹⁴⁰ Hosking was killed.

In several ways Hosking embodied all the traits required for a soldier that would fit the Anzac legend, and was also perfect officer material. Physically he fitted the bill admirably. Although not overly tall, he was fair-haired and blue-eyed, and with no record of illness must have been reasonably fit. He had come from a well-to-do family, had been well educated, excelled in

¹³⁷ Officially the first day for enlisting in the AIF was 11 August 1914 but men were able to put their names down earlier. Gammage, *op cit*, p. 6. Enlistment for the ANMEF began on 10 August 1914. Piggott, *The Coconut Lancers*, p. 18.

¹³⁸ Major Arnold Kingsley Hosking, 305 ANMEF and 20 Bn, single, engineer of Wollongong, enlisted 10 August 1914. KIA 20 September 1917 aged 26 years.

¹³⁹ AWM 28, Collection 2, 20 Battalion, Item 2.

¹⁴⁰ Bean, *Official History*, Vol. IV, p. 766.

military training and was seemingly ready to lead his men to serve their King and country. His acts of bravery and exemplary behaviour were fitted the patriotic image of a war hero defending his country. But it is what he wrote on his will that indicates that he also one of the boys, or at least wanted to be:

I ain't got nothing to leave so I don't give a God dam who gets it. Lieut Potter sig Officer 20 Bat will pay my debts.¹⁴¹

Although Hosking may have moved up the ranks fairly rapidly, there was some opportunity for those who had enlisted as privates to become officers. Another former Coronation Cadet who was also awarded a Military Cross was Henry Neaves¹⁴² of Unanderra who had enlisted as a private and was progressively promoted, becoming a lieutenant in June 1917. Another nine privates made similar transitions but all had come from the middle class and had worked in clerical and professional positions. Many working class volunteers managed to promoted, but with the exception of William Schadel,¹⁴³ the upper limit attained by these Illawarra volunteers was sergeant.

It could be assumed that enlisting was a natural progression for conscientious young men such as Arnold Hosking, who had spent some time as part-time soldiers. But there is a considerable difference between dressing up and playing war games, and killing and being killed. Many others with a long history of compulsory and voluntary military training did not enlist until much later in the war.¹⁴⁴

To understand why some men who were eligible and did not enlist becomes a complex exercise. Retrospectively it is virtually impossible, and even in

¹⁴¹ Will of Arnold Kingsley Hosking, written in January or February 1917. NAA B2455, Arnold Kingsley Hosking.

¹⁴² Lt Henry Herbert Neaves, 45 Bn, law clerk of Unanderra, enlisted 15 May 1915, RTA 1 July 1919. Born Wollongong 1892 died 22 February 1933.

¹⁴³ 2/Lieutenant William Herbert Schadel, 13 Bn, single, striker of Bellambi. Schadel enlisted 27 October 1914 as Private 1074, 13 Bn.

¹⁴⁴ This aspect of the Illawarra volunteers has not yet been explored in depth. However many of the 221 men who have previous military experience listed on AWM 8 did not enlist until 1916, with a smaller number enlisting in 1917.

the contemporary era would have presented some difficulties. Desire to become a volunteer was not enough. Compared to the physical attributes necessary to enlist towards the end of the war, early volunteers were required to meet an extremely high standard. At different times during the war standards for various physical attributes were relaxed. Two such examples which would have allowed vast numbers of previously ineligible men to enlist were the lowering of the minimum height to 5 feet 2 inches in June 1915, and accepting men with upper and lower dentures.¹⁴⁵ Height requirements would have been widely known at the time. It would have been immediately obvious that a man may have been too short to enlist, but the state of their teeth, or other more obscured physical failings such as a mild intellectual disability would have been far less visible. The nature of industry in the Illawarra would have also precluded some fit men from enlisting. Coal mines and metal industries were essential to the war effort and a certain number of men were needed to keep these industries working to capacity. As the reality of war was brought home to the Illawarra by wounded returned soldiers and the ever growing casualty lists, a fear of death or injury probably caused others to search for reasons to not enlist.

Some men had actually enlisted but did not make it to the front. Amongst the 2,500 recruits from Casula Camp who caused havoc in hotels in the Liverpool area on 14 February 1916 were a number of Illawarra men. The men were rebelling against the conditions at Casula and caused considerable damage to property as well as stealing large amounts of liquor. In a drunken state hundreds of these men continued on to Sydney where the riot was quelled with the use of gunfire.¹⁴⁶ Exactly how many Illawarra men were involved is not known, but from just the Balgownie men in this camp at the time, two were discharged and at least two were cautioned. Another Balgownie man, James Donnan, had been discharged after a disturbance at

¹⁴⁵ Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services*, Vol. 1, p. 525.

¹⁴⁶ Robson, *The First AIF*, p. 69.

the same camp in November 1915.¹⁴⁷ January 1916 had seen the highest number of monthly enlistments by Illawarra men during the course of the war, and along with the Waratah marchers who were also in camps at this time the number of Illawarra men either discharged or cautioned could be expected to be quite high.

Men had volunteered from the Illawarra region from all social classes and for a myriad of the reasons that historians have speculated on: mateship, the excitement of battle, patriotic obligations, economic need, an opportunity to travel and loyalty to family. One striking characteristic apparent in the Illawarra was the lack of success that the official mechanisms had in motivating men to enlist. Recruiting meetings and the Waratah march did little directly to induce men to come forward for service. Enlisting with a mate, although not a reason in itself for volunteering, was certainly prevalent amongst the volunteers from the region and could have been the final push for some who had been contemplating enlisting.

¹⁴⁷ This information is from notes kept by William Davies of Balgownie. One of the two men discharged after the incident on 14 February 1916 subsequently re-enlisted.

Chapter Four

“I know the chances are I shall not come
back”¹⁴⁸

The war experience of the Illawarra Volunteers

Much has been written from first hand accounts of Australians in World War I. In *The Broken Years* Bill Gammage used hundreds of contemporary letters and diaries to explore the Great War through the thoughts of the participants. Alistair Thomson's effective use of oral history in *Anzac Memories* has not only revealed the individual war experiences of a number of men, but he has shown how their memories have been selective and often shaped by their lives after the war. Numerous other books based on the diaries of one, or just a few men have been published from just after the war right up until the present decade.¹⁴⁹

The experiences of the Illawarra volunteers during the war are also an important element in understanding the way in which these men and women responded to their situation. Some diaries and letters written by Illawarra volunteers exist in archival repositories and private collections, but with no Illawarra volunteers still living an oral history approach such as that undertaken by Alistair Thomson was impossible. Official records are available for almost every volunteer giving a chronological, if clinical, statement of a man's service. By using these and available diaries and

¹⁴⁸ Alfred Shipp at his farewell, quoted by his father at his memorial service, *Illawarra Mercury* 8 June 1915. The same words were also mentioned by his father on Alfred's Roll of Honour Circular (AWM 131).

¹⁴⁹ For example: Downing, *To the Last Ridge*, Champion, Melbourne, 1920; East (ed.), *The Gallipoli Diary of Sergeant Lawrence*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981; Young and Gammage (eds), *Hail and Farewell, Letters From Two Brothers Killed in France*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1995; Campbell and Hosken (eds), *Four Australians at War. Letters to Argyle 1914-1919*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1996.

letters it is possible to glean something of how the war affected these volunteers, and also how it was perceived by them.

A number of Illawarra volunteers were prolific diary writers, but two stand out for the way in which they imparted their own personality into their words. Diaries can often reveal more personal thoughts than letters for they are usually written for oneself, rather than been written specifically for the readership of others which could influence what is written. Albert Edwards wrote his recollections shortly after returning to Australia based on a diary he kept during the war, and Ron Finlayson¹⁵⁰ kept a detailed diary during the war.

Albert Edwards' recollections of his experience of the Great War are the most complete and illuminating account written by an Illawarra volunteer. On his return to Australia Edwards resumed his civilian public service job and a transfer to Melbourne in March 1919 left him spare time to write his account of the war.¹⁵¹

Although Edwards was employed in Canberra at the time of his enlistment, his references to his Wollongong friends indicate that he was very much a boy from Wollongong. His account reveals much about his personal attitudes to and feelings about many aspects of war. It also supplies some answers to one man's motivations and reactions to topics that have been speculated upon by historians. For this man a youthful idealistic view of war was influenced by history books of his time, which promoted chivalry and heroism. The reality of war quickly dispelled such thoughts:

There was always something thrilling and exciting when I thought of the victories of war, and of captured cities, but there was nothing to tell me of the other side of war, of the fleshless blackened bones of simple men lying rotting in the shell torn earth, of the blinded who would never see God's blue sky again, of the maimed and crippled. There was nothing to tell me of the hideous nightmare of pounding shells and long nights of agony. Today those high sounding phrases of chivalry and tales of heroism are replaced by a

¹⁵⁰ Lt Ronald Berry Finlayson 1 Bn, single, bank officer of Wollongong, enlisted 29 October 1915. KIA 5 November 1916 aged 26 years.

¹⁵¹ Although contemporary sources have been preferred as the primary sources of local information for this paper, the immediacy and articulate writing of Edwards' recollections make it one of the most important manuscripts written by an Illawarra volunteer.

great regret when I think of the many I knew, so full of the fire of youth, so full of the glamour of life, who lie out under little wooden crosses in the rainswept fields of Flanders and of the Somme.¹⁵²

As commander of 7 Platoon, 1 Battalion, Edwards became exceedingly familiar with the futility of the orders of higher level officers. One particular battle had dire consequences for Edwards' men and Lieutenant Finlayson of Wollongong. On 5 November 1916 near Gueudecourt, and despite incessant rain and no real knowledge of the whereabouts of the German front line, B, C and D companies of the 1 Battalion were instructed to straighten out the line and capture German trenches. Of this action Edwards writes:¹⁵³

That attack, I am afraid was pre-ordained to failure. We all sewed a square yellow patch on the centre of each other the "yellow peril", but I am afraid the only persons in peril were ourselves. As we assembled in our jumping out trenches awaiting the stroke of midnight it rained for half an hour like hell, wet through to the skin, frozen stiff, mud to the knees, one could not see his hand in front of his face, and to fill our cup of discomfort, pressed down and flowing over, Fritz opened a whirlwind barrage on us ten minutes before zero hour. That was the last straw, half of us were killed before we started.¹⁵⁴

Only seven men from Edwards' platoon answered roll call the next morning. Edwards also notes that Lieutenant Ron Finlayson of Wollongong was killed. Finlayson had kept a detailed diary that had abruptly ended just before 5 November 1916. An annotation in another hand notes: 'Nov 5th officially reported missing',¹⁵⁵

As well as the reality of the present, the writings of most diarists revealed their continual thoughts of home, family and friends. In an entry on the 28 November 1916 Lt Finlayson is elated to find his brother, Malcolm,¹⁵⁶ is close enough to be able to visit him.

¹⁵² Edwards, *The Seventh Platoon*, p. 2.

¹⁵³ An account of this attack is in Bean, *Official History*, Vol. III, pp. 906-908.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, *The Seventh Platoon*, p. 34.

¹⁵⁵ AWM 1DRL 287, Private papers of Lt Ronald Berry Finlayson

¹⁵⁶ Captain Malcolm Robert Finlayson AAMC, single, medical practitioner of Wollongong, enlisted 1 March 1916.

28.10.16

This time have great news to relate. I had a visit from young brother - just a short one, but you can imagine what we had to say to each other. I was wrong in stating that he was up in the front line, as I had been misinformed regarding the whereabouts of his Battn. He is situated a mere couple of miles away on the top of an adjacent hill. I can also tell you of the cheerful conditions reigning here. ...Malcolm looks well and has had a great time in the various place he has been in. He also cherished some photos of home. Little snaps of Lightcliffe etc. He had such a good one of himself and Rosalie Cowdery taken on the roof of Farmers. We both agreed that we would not mind having afternoon tea there today, but instead we had it in Doc Kirkwood's dugout with old Elijah Easterbrook to wait on us. ... Malcolm is amongst a good many whom he knows and had to report having received a huge amount of correspondence from Australia. There is just the chance of him coming down again tomorrow and I hope he does, as he was not here long today.¹⁵⁷

Unfortunately, it appears Malcolm did not have an opportunity to visit again, but he perhaps took solace in the fact that he had finally found his brother before it was too late.

Whilst Edwards wrote to record his war experience and Finlayson wrote privately, other Illawarra volunteers were frequent writers of letters home, many of which appeared in the local press. Some even wrote specifically to the press. Of the earlier volunteers, Fred Muir¹⁵⁸ of Unanderra became a peer appointed scribe of sorts for the Illawarra boys training in Egypt. In a letter dated 28 March 1915 he writes:

It is really surprising to see the number of local people scattered about here. They have asked me to act as a kind of secretary to keep the names and addresses of all the Illawarra members, so that we may keep in touch with one another, so I will be glad to hear of any local identities who have joined the forces.¹⁵⁹

In the same letter Muir also describes a photo taken just a month before the Gallipoli landing of a number of the Illawarra men of the first contingent. Twenty-eight men from various units had gathered in front of the Sphinx, for many this would be the last time that they were photographed. Muir's

¹⁵⁷ AWM IDRL 287 op cit. 'Lightcliffe' was the Finlayson family home in Wollongong.

¹⁵⁸ Pte 644 Frederick Warren Muir, 1 Bn, single, law student of Unanderra, enlisted 22 August 1914. DOW 28 November 1915 aged 22 years.

¹⁵⁹ *Illawarra Mercury*, 14 May 1915.

letters were published for only a relatively short time as he was not to survive Gallipoli.

Nurse Muriel Wakeford¹⁶⁰ was another correspondent whose long and detailed letters appeared in the *Illawarra Mercury*. Following the Gallipoli landing, Nurse Wakeford was part of the medical team travelling from Alexandria to retrieve wounded men from the peninsula.¹⁶¹ This took her close to the battlefield, so close that on one trip enemy shells splintered the deck of the hospital ship on which she was serving. Although Nurse Wakeford describes many aspects of the early days of the war in a fairly business-like manner, her prose is not without emotion and she is also the conveyor of some strong personal opinions. In one letter, having dealt with the scene at hand, the local men she has met, the need for nurses and doctors and her hopes that the Red Cross is active in Wollongong, she proceeds to add her own view of the enemy:

I would use a dum dum bullet on every German and Turk I could get a shot at. It is time Britain gave up fighting like gentlemen and paid Germany back in some of her own coin. Fresh evidence of their "kulture" comes to light daily. On our last trip we had a wounded Turk on board, he was a miserable devil, but I believe they are huge men and very game.¹⁶²

Nurse Wakeford's words are her response to the horrific damage to the soldiers which she and her fellow nurses and doctors were constantly trying to repair. Her call for even more severe treatment of the enemy is likely borne of frustration at the futility of the situation, but is also at odds with the general perception of nurses as gentle carers of the wounded. Wakeford's long letters ceased when she decided to marry. AIF policy which forbade nurses from marrying was discriminatory as any male serving overseas was accorded the right to marry, with the AIF even providing ships for the

¹⁶⁰ Staff Nurse Muriel Leontine Wakeford, AANS, 2 AGH, single of Wollongong, enlisted 24 November 1914, resigned from service 28 June 1916.

¹⁶¹ This information is gleaned from Nurse Wakeford's published letter. Although she had enlisted on 14 November 1914, her attestation papers were not processed until 10 December 1915. Official records relating to nurses were recorded and kept in *some* cases. Personal correspondence with Australian Archives. The lack of information in Nurse Wakeford's records may also be because she had moved from AIF command. It is possible that Nurse Wakeford was one of the nurses of 2 AGH seconded to British hospital ships, see Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, p. 44.

transportation of war brides and children at the end of the war. Regulations were also administered unevenly as some nurses married secretly for fear of dismissal. Others were openly known to be married, including Sister Elsie Cook of the 2 AGH, the same hospital unit as Nurse Wakeford. Nurse Cook was refused promotion for being married.¹⁶³ Given the problems that marriage and continued service would bring, it is not surprising that Nurse Wakeford chose to resign.

Many letter writers would have been aware that their prose could well be published in the local press. The content of numerous and often lengthy letters sent home by those on active service appear to have been written with this mind. They are at times very impersonal, but descriptive of various aspects of what their authors had been doing both at the front and when on leave. The intensity and detail in descriptions of action at the front were dependent on not only the writer, but also the censor. With published letters it is generally impossible to know if any of the letters had been censored, but it is more than likely that some had for place names are conspicuous by their absence. Writing from Gallipoli, George Payne¹⁶⁴ notes that 'we are not allowed to write what we would like', and also asks (tongue in cheek!) that he be sent some writing paper and envelopes 'as it is very short here, and no stationery shops are open'.¹⁶⁵

Often the first letters received by relatives were posted long before the new recruits had reached the front. These too were often printed in newspapers with a distinctly different tone to those that were written from the front. Typical were the comments of two members of the 2 Remounts, Trooper Selby Stephenson¹⁶⁶ and Sergeant Thomas Irwin whose respective letters from Fremantle described their trip thus far as 'pleasant' and 'splendid'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Muriel Wakeford, *Illawarra Mercury*, 25 June 1915.

¹⁶³ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁴ Gnr 265 George William Ross Payne, 1 FAB, enlisted 24 August 1914, RTA 8 November 1918.

¹⁶⁵ *Illawarra Mercury*, 27 July 1915.

¹⁶⁶ Tpr 1392 Edwin Selby Stephenson, 2 Remounts, single of Wollongong, enlisted 24 September 1915, RTA 29 April 1916.

¹⁶⁷ *Illawarra Mercury*, 3 December 1915 and 30 November 1915.

Most letters made some mention of the sights that had been seen but some men wrote extensively of their tours whilst on furlough. Whether or not travel had been an incentive for enlistment, once overseas the most was made of the opportunity to see places that they had often only read of, or perhaps never heard of.

Cameras were banned on the Western Front but postcards showing scenes of the towns, cities and the countryside, which the men had visited and had fought near, were readily available. Bruce Caldwell¹⁶⁸ sent home many letters and souvenirs, but perhaps for his family the most graphic images of the war in which he was participating were contained within the booklets of postcards that he sent home in August 1917. One of these, *Albert Apres le Bombardement*, which shows the city of Albert in ruins, was annotated 'To Mother with love from Bruce, Aug. 1917'. Before Bruce's mother received this booklet she would have been notified of his death.

Common to most letters was a numerous sprinkling of the names of friends and acquaintances from home with whom they had been in contact with. Even if trying to be cheerful when writing to friends and family most letters were tempered with tragedy as local men were continually wounded or killed.

The reality of war quashed the anticipation of the excitement of battle that inspired many to enlist. John Croft¹⁶⁹ was wounded at the landing on 25 April 1915 and this changed his attitude towards the war. In a letter dated 5 May 1915 he writes from Mena Hospital:

Dear Friend

Just a line to let you know I am getting on alright. I am at Mena House Hospital with a bullet through the left forearm, the result of last Sunday's fighting [Croft is referring to the 25 April 1915] when we forced a landing at big odds.

It was a great fight while we were getting out of the boats and a good many got shot but a baynot [sic] charge soon stopped the Turks and things got

¹⁶⁸ Pte 2146 Bruce Caldwell, 53 Bn, single, farmer of Corrimal, enlisted 28 February 1916. KIA 24 September 1917 aged 22 years.

¹⁶⁹ Pte 1343 John Hector Croft, 3 Bn, single, driver of Bulli, enlisted 3 November 1914. DOD 27 July 1916 aged 25.

pretty lively. Towards 12 noon they were knocking us over pretty often and I stopped a bullet in my pocket book after it had been through my arm, a good thing for me that it turned against the bone causing it to come out broadside on (as the doctors say) in which fashion it entered my pocket book going almost entirely through it, had it done so there would have been no more Turks for me. I thought I was finished as it was the blow over the heart knocking me out.

I will send you the pocket book to keep for me as soon as I go to Cairo, it is no use to me now, but as it saved my life, I would like to keep it as a curio not that I shall ever want reminding of my first battle it was too awful. I enjoyed it until I got shot then I had to leave the firing line and make the best of my way back. The Turks peppered us with shrapnel all the way back to the beach and even while we were being taken to the hospital ship. Well I am not complaining it is what I was looking for and I got it. We are very well looked after by the nurses and doctors and we will soon be at them again. My arm is nearly healed up but I have lost the use of my hand for a while. I hope you are all doing well although things must be very slack in Bulli just now. But a long way better than this place with its dirty niggers and flies. Well no more this time remember me to all.

Yours sincerely
John Croft¹⁷⁰

Some men had little cheer to convey home and limited experience of the war at the front to talk about. Illness and misdemeanors kept them away from the fighting. If death had been escaped, wounds of a horrific nature were often sustained. Joseph Crompton Salisbury¹⁷¹ did not write himself of his experiences, but from his personal records it possible to see that he had been in conflict in one form or another for almost the total time of his overseas service. Eight days after embarking with 3 Battalion reinforcements he was fined five shillings for being in the crews' quarters. Before being taken on strength by his unit at Gallipoli he had been court martialled for another unspecified offence for which he was sentenced to twelve months hard labour, later commuted to 49 days. Salisbury did make it to the front at Gallipoli for sixteen days before being admitted to a succession of hospitals with enteric fever. From late November 1915 until May 1916 he was continually losing pay for being AWL and hesitating to

¹⁷⁰ AWM PR82/107 Private records of John Hector Croft. The pocket book mentioned by Croft is also part of this private record collection with the bullet rip extending almost completely through the book.

¹⁷¹ Pte 2018 Joseph Crompton Salisbury 3 and 55 Bns, married, miner of Woonona, enlisted 21 January 1915. Born 13 December 1889 at Balgownie, died 1 May 1959.

obey orders. Just days after rejoining his unit (now the 55 Bn) Salisbury's wayward ways were halted for good at Fromelles when a severe gun-shot wound to the face caused deafness and a severe disfigurement that he would carry for life.¹⁷²

Time in hospital suffering from illness was very common. The temptations available to men in their free time resulted in numerous cases of venereal disease. Boys became men very quickly: seventeen year old Abram Fletcher found himself in hospital with gonorrhoea just three months after leaving Australia.¹⁷³ Some men spent a great of time moving from place to place, but with little of it having much to do with fighting.

Daniel Dignam¹⁷⁴ of Clifton was one the original members of the 3 Battalion but spent most of 1915 in and out of hospital with bronchitis and pleurisy. His service records suggest he was prone to malingering. It appears he did not participate in fighting on Gallipoli due to illness, but between January and June 1916 his health improved and no hospital visits were recorded. But just as the full-scale entry of the AIF into the fighting on the Western Front was drawing near, Dignam suffered a sprained ankle that necessitated his removal to a hospital in England. This is despite the opinion of a doctor who describes his injury as 'of a trivial nature' that will 'probably not interfere with his future efficiency as a soldier'.¹⁷⁵ This injury was certified by Dignam to have occurred in his own time.¹⁷⁶ Australian doctors did show some sympathy towards war weary men with wounds or illnesses that suggested malingering,¹⁷⁷ but Dignam had yet to reach the front. Still in England, and before being taken back on strength by his unit in December 1916, he managed to acquire a case of venereal disease (which gave him another hospital stay) and after that was another week of freedom

¹⁷² NAA B2455, Joseph Crompton Salisbury.

¹⁷³ NAA B2455, Abram Fletcher.

¹⁷⁴ Pte 117 Daniel William Dignam, 3 Bn, single, railway operator of Clifton, enlisted 17 August 1914, RTA 12 May 1919.

¹⁷⁵ H H Gordon, AAMC, noted on Daniel William Dignam, B103 form.

¹⁷⁶ Daniel William Dignam, B103 form.

¹⁷⁷ Bourke, Joanna, 'Swinging the lead: malingering, Australian soldiers, and the Great War', *JAWM*, 26, April 1995, pp. 14-15.

whilst being AWL. No diligence to duty was apparent in the opening weeks of 1917 for Dignam was charged on 8 January with being drunk on duty. February was a bad month for a man who had tried his hardest to avoid being in the thick of fighting. Dignam was taken prisoner by the Germans at Ligny on the 28 February 1917¹⁷⁸ and was not to return to England until 26 December 1918. Leave was granted immediately on his repatriation but the cost of that was 68 days in hospital with another bout of venereal disease. Dignam eventually returned to Australia on 12 May 1919.

Having an even shorter time in battle, but for very different reasons, was Alfred Smith of Thirroul.¹⁷⁹ The experience of Smith illustrates just how quickly a bullet could curtail a volunteer's time at the front. From enlistment to discharge Smith spent 14 months in the AIF, of which less than one day was in the firing line. After advancing just 200 yards Smith was hit, but his wounds would heal, unlike his fatally wounded mates who fell around him. One of these mates, Jeff Mack, had died as he reassured Smith that his wound was not serious. Three bullets had ensured Smith a trip home via a hospital in England, a convalescent home and enough time to visit long lost relatives in Cornwall.¹⁸⁰

Henry Selwyn Ziems¹⁸¹ of the 12 Light Horse was dissatisfied with the level of action that his unit was seeing in Egypt. Writing to his father in late 1916 he said he was in the best of health, but 'would be much more contented if he was permitted to go to France and take part in the fighting there.'¹⁸² Ziems may never have known how close he came to having his wish granted. General William R Birdwood had suggested that the 11 and 12 Light Horse be sent to France to relieve the great need for reinforcements

¹⁷⁸ The 3 and 4 Bns had relieved the 3 Brigade on the night of the 27 February 1917, see Bean, *Official History*, Vol. IV, pp. 94-5.

¹⁷⁹ Pte 3233 Alfred Smith, 45 Bn, married, miner of Thirroul, enlisted 1 November 1916.

¹⁸⁰ Smith, 'Reminiscences of World War One by Alfred Smith', *Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin*, May 1989, pp. 26-28 and June 1989 pp. 31-35.

¹⁸¹ Tpr 1590 Henry Selwyn Ziems, 12 LH, enlisted 12 July 1915, RTA 16 March 1919. Born Albion Park 1897.

necessary as a result of heavy casualties, but this request was turned down by the War Office.¹⁸³ Although the Illawarra volunteers in the 12 Light Horse had a high death rate for a mounted unit, with four of twelve men dying, Ziems and his brother (in the same unit) both returned to Australia in 1919.

Another Lighthorseman who would have undoubtedly yearned for a different environment was Archibald Hewitson,¹⁸⁴ who was captured by the Turks on 28 March 1918. One of only 16 members of the 6 Light Horse taken prisoner during the course of the war, Hewitson's statement of his experiences as a prisoner of war are a detailed exposé of the way in which the enemy treated their captives. Although severely wounded after being shot in the back, Hewitson was stripped of all clothing and possessions immediately after being taken by the enemy. At this point no attempt was made by the Turks to dress his wound. Hewitson had handed one of two bandages he had managed to keep to his captor, but the Turk just put it in his pocket. In a very poor state he was transported by train to Damascus and received treatment in two different hospitals over a period of thirteen weeks, during which time he considered he was fairly treated. But for the rest of his period of incarceration he had no positive comments. In July 1918 he was moved to Belemedic where he came into contact with Germans and notes in his statement that 'intense hatred was shown by both Turks and Germans towards one another'.¹⁸⁵

For the first two months of Hewitson's captivity he was listed as 'missing'. Missing soldiers were often already dead and the whilst the term 'missing' gave some level of hope to the families of these men, the arrival of a parcel

¹⁸² *Illawarra Mercury*, 5 January 1917.

¹⁸³ Robson, *The First AIF*, pp. 83-4.

¹⁸⁴ Tpr 948 Archibald Richmond Hewitson, 6 LH, married, fettler of North Kiama, enlisted 20 January 1915, RTA 25 December 1918.

¹⁸⁵ AWM 30 B2.6 Statement of Experiences whilst a prisoner of war in Turkey by 948 L/Cpl A R Hewitson.

containing Hewitson's belongings in September 1918 could have hardly lifted the spirits of his wife, Caroline.¹⁸⁶ When she found out that her husband was still alive is unknown, but with that news her emotions would have turned full circle, from grief to elation.

Dignam was not the only Illawarra man to be taken as a prisoner by the Germans. Another was John Sharman¹⁸⁷ who was never to see his family or comrades again. Already wounded when captured in April 1918, Sharman was admitted to Bavarian Field Hospital 14, but died on 13 May 1918. Sharman had initially been listed as killed in action on 14 April 1918 but this was officially altered to prisoner of war, and unofficially as having died whilst a prisoner in August 1918. By July 1919 his status was unchanged although as she saw the men returning home to Wollongong, Sharman's sister and next of kin, Sarah Ann Morgan would have known that her brother would not be amongst them.

Sharman's records also tell a story commonly found amongst Illawarra volunteers when it came to the distribution of World War I medals. In instances where it had been necessary to contact the military authorities it was often women, usually mothers and wives, who have been found to have undertaken the majority of this correspondence. There was seemingly no problem with these authorities replying to, and supplying information to these women, even if they had not been named as the next of kin. However, when it came to the distribution of medals a strict hierarchy was adhered to which paid no respect to individual circumstances, or to the preference of next of kin that the soldier had nominated.

Sharman's mother had died in 1911 and his father, although still living, had left many years previously. Aged only 19 years and 2 months he effectively had no parents when he enlisted and had named his sister, Sarah Ann

¹⁸⁶ No copies of correspondence between the AIF and Hewitson's wife are contained in his official records.

¹⁸⁷ Pte 1080 John Edward Sharman, 3 Bn, single, coke worker of Bellambi, enlisted 24 March 1916, DOW 13 May 1918 Belgium aged 21 years.

Morgan as both next of kin and as beneficiary of his will. When John Sharman's possessions were returned to Australia they were sent to his sister as his will had specified, but not his medals. They were to be distributed to the relative highest in the order dictated by the Deceased Soldiers Estate Act 1918. Although Sharman's father had not been part of his life, he was still living, so therefore after being located by AIF Base Records his son's medals were duly sent to him.

World War I placed thousands of men in an extraordinary situation where risking one's own life became a necessary, and often daily occurrence. Many Illawarra men were rewarded with decorations for acts of bravery, but many, probably a majority, were not. The actions of some were mentioned in officers' diaries and notebooks for future recommendation, but although awards did not eventuate they give a glimpse of what some men were experiencing at the front. Notes written at Gallipoli during April and May by Colonel Robert H Owen record officers, non-commissioned officers and men who were considered to have acted above the call of duty. Privates Edwin Powell¹⁸⁸ and Jack Owens¹⁸⁹ from the Illawarra appear on this list with Owens warranting a more detailed mention:

re John Owens No 559. In the absence of Capt Bean R.M.D. who was wounded early in the engagement after showing great coolness & bravery in discharge of his duty I have to report that from my own personal knowledge & observation during the fighting on Tuesday & Wednesday the A.A.M.C. & bearers worked magnificently. The trenches which barely gave any cover being isolated under heavy rifle & M/Gun fire. Private John Owens was particularly hard working brave.¹⁹⁰

That John Owens had even made it to Gallipoli was a feat in itself. Rejected three times, forty-six year old Owens was finally accepted on 26 August 1914. At this time standards for age, height and weight requirements for recruits were very high to ensure that men were of peak physical size and condition. The age of recruits was restricted to men from 19 to 38 years

¹⁸⁸ Pte 168 Edwin Powell, 3 Bn, single, carpenter of Wollongong.

¹⁸⁹ Pte 559 John (Jack) Owens, 3 Bn, single, miner of Keiraville. KIA 7 August 1915 aged 47 years. Born in Wales.

¹⁹⁰ AWM 2 DRL 130, entry dated 14 May 1915.

who were at least five feet six inches tall with a chest measurement of 34 inches or more.¹⁹¹ Whilst he may have satisfied the height and chest measurements, Owens was considerably older than almost all volunteers at that time. Having gained a place in the AIF Owens did not keep quiet about his age, rather he was a person of interest at a large farewell dinner held on Saturday 5 September 1914 at Finlayson's Hotel in Wollongong. The *Illawarra Mercury* was seemingly unconcerned about broadcasting Owens' age either, with their report of the function making a point of mentioning his over-age status.¹⁹²

Owens had overcome his age handicap in gaining a place in the AIF, survived the landing at Gallipoli and the subsequent months of close combat, but persistence and bravery can do nothing to stop a bullet. Jack Owens' war came to an end at Lone Pine.

The official war records of Albert Henry Sloan¹⁹³ are amongst the most complex and difficult to interpret of any Illawarra volunteer. Born and reared in Wollongong, Sloan had enlisted in August 1914 and embarked overseas with the 3 Battalion which would have included many familiar faces. Having spent just three weeks at Gallipoli, he was transferred to Alexandria to perform non-combatant duties although he was not physically injured. He was returned to Australia in September 1915.

In total, Sloan enlisted three times. It is possible Sloan was under some type of family pressure to become a soldier. His brother, Francis Sloan,¹⁹⁴ and a cousin, John Sloan,¹⁹⁵ had also enlisted in August 1914. Francis Sloan was

¹⁹¹ Bean, *Official History*, Vol. I, pp. 59-60.

¹⁹² *Illawarra Mercury*, 8 September 1914.

¹⁹³ Pte 1379 Albert Henry Sloan, 3 Bn, hairdresser of Wollongong. Married between his first two enlistments. Enlisted (1) 18 August 1914, discharged medically unfit 2 December 1915. Enlisted (2) 18 January 1916, discharged medically unfit July 1916. Enlisted (3) 16 April 1918 as Alfred Edward Smith. Died 14 November 1918

¹⁹⁴ Gnr 303 Francis Peter Sloan, 1 FAB, single, labourer of Wollongong, enlisted 24 August 1915, RTA 3 February 1915. Re-enlisted 3 June 1916 as Pte 7116, 1 Bn.

¹⁹⁵ Pte 1378 John Henry Sloan, 3 Bn, single, baker of Wollongong, enlisted 27 August 1914, RTA 10 January 1918.

returned to Australia in February 1915 but re-enlisted in June 1916. Cousin John Sloan did not return until January 1918.

What is more difficult to comprehend is the way in which Sloan failed to cope with his military situation at various times. Whether this was a pre-existing condition, or was a result of his time training, or his three weeks on Gallipoli is not clear. There is some evidence that it may have been pre-existing, as the first incidence of Sloan's inability to cope with conditions occurred in January 1915 when he was hospitalised for exposure, fatigue and what he himself described as 'heart trouble'. Ultimately, there was something that troubled him enough to cause him to take his own life.

Sloan's records reveal a number of inconsistencies where he appears to have bent the truth a little, with the only real benefit appearing to be an enhanced chance of being accepted by the AIF. With his first enlistment his height is overstated by three inches when compared with his later attestation papers, although this has been found to be a fairly common occurrence for early enlistees.¹⁹⁶ He was discharged after enlisting a second time after it was discovered that he had been previously discharged as unfit, and a medical board again found him to be unfit on the grounds of nervous instability in July 1916. In May 1918, one month after enlisting under the alias of Alfred Edward Smith, Sloan was listed as a deserter. In September 1918 he re-appeared and his true identity was discovered. He was fined £1 but was not discharged. He disappeared again on 24 October 1918 with his clothing and kit bag but never returned to camp. Sloan committed suicide on 14 November 1918. Having been twice discharged as unfit for service, he did not have to enlist again, he chose to do so. The date of his suicide is probably quite significant. But whether the Armistice prompted him to take his own life because there was then no chance of overseas service, or

¹⁹⁶ In many of the cases where August 1914 enlistments have re-enlisted the stated height on their August 1914 attestation papers has been found to be at least two inches higher than later attestation papers.

because he feared shame associated with his inability to cope with even camp conditions, or for another reason remains a mystery.

Rank was no barrier to the difficulties of mentally coping with war. Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Haylock Owen was one of Wollongong's local war heroes, and also one to succumb to the stress of war. The Owen family were well known and according to press reports seemingly well liked within the region. They had also been heavily involved in military activities in the region, so it would have come as no surprise to the locals when Owen was chosen to command the 3 Battalion. Throughout preparations of his unit in Australia and Egypt Owen was held in high regard by his men and Charles Bean. Bean suggests that each regiment developed a character of their own which was a reflection of their particular commanding officer, and in Owen's battalion, he describes the men as being treated as 'gentlemen':

Colonel Owen, of the 3rd, was a father to his men, a commander with the most gentle consideration, who persisted in treating every man as a gentleman in spite of disappointments from the occasional black sheep. "Because there are one or two black sheep in the regiment I'm not going to treat nine hundred men as if they were blackguards," he said.¹⁹⁷

At the time of the formation of the AIF, Owen was by far the most experienced soldier in terms of time served in the regular army, and although having been with the British Army, was the only Australian born amongst MacLaurin's selections to command the first four battalions of the AIF.¹⁹⁸ However, his battlefield experience was negligible, although no amount of previous warfare could have been expected to prepare a man for the confusion and slaughter of the Gallipoli landing. Unofficially Owen left Gallipoli as a result of a foot wound sustained on 21 June 1915, which is described in the 3 Battalion unit history as 'sufficiently serious to put him out of action for the remainder of the war'.¹⁹⁹ He did suffer such an injury,

¹⁹⁷ Bean, *Official History*, Vol. I, p. 134.

¹⁹⁸ The commanders of the 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalions were respectively, Colonel L Dobbin VD, b. Ireland, Lieut.-Colonel G F Braund VD, b. England, and Lieut.-Colonel A J Onslow Thompson VD, b. Wales. Bean, *Official History*, Vol. I, pp. 52-53. Owen was born in Wollongong 7 January 1862.

¹⁹⁹ Wren, *Randwick to Hargicourt*, p. 90.

but his medical records do not support this as a cause for permanent removal from the peninsular. His real problem was his mental state, which had deteriorated rapidly. Owen's medical reports describe him as having

sustained a nervous breakdown in Gallipoli in early July; sent to hospital in Alexandria; board there invalided him to England; went before board at Colchester; granted sick leave until October 20th. He cannot concentrate his mind, suffers from headaches, memory bad, sleep irregular, is emotional and excitable.²⁰⁰

Once back in Wollongong the cause for his return was given as a physical injury. Although his inability to cope with the situation would have been obvious to many around him, there would have been little to gain and perhaps much to lose in terms of morale and there was the possibility of deterring future volunteers if it had been widely publicised. So at the time, and later at the hands of both Bean and the 3 Battalion historian, Owen's dignity was maintained, but the significant effect on the minds on those in the thick of fighting is omitted from the historical record. Later historians have given a more balanced account of events by including these aspects of war. In *Monash as Military Commander* Peter Pedersen notes that Owen's 'near-hysterical pleas for reinforcement as 'a matter of life or death' suggested he would soon be broken by the same strain that had defeated Sinclair-McLagan.'²⁰¹ This was on 27 April 1915 but Owen lasted almost two months more. Bean had noticed and acknowledged in his diary the extreme pressure that Owen was under:

His messages were rather impassioned and, I think, were considered hysterical, but everyone inclined that way and Owen's position was certainly critical.²⁰²

However Bean toned down the strength of these diary words in the official history, where he described Owen as making 'an urgent request for reinforcements'.²⁰³

²⁰⁰NAA B2455, Robert Haylock Owen

²⁰¹ Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander*, p. 67.

²⁰² AWM38/606/6 Bean's diary April – May 1915, covering the first week at Gallipoli, cited in Winter, *25 April 1915*, p. 203.

²⁰³ Bean, *Official History*, Volume I, p.522.

That Owen's condition was not widely known is not surprising. Mental instability was equated with cowardice and malingering. There was a high ratio of cases of 'shell shock' and other forms of neurasthenia amongst officers in both the AIF and the British Army, which was becoming apparent before the end of the war.²⁰⁴

The experience of the Illawarra volunteers mirrored that of the majority of the members of the AIF. Those at the front line were vulnerable to death, injury or illness. It was also varied, for in even some small way each participant's experience was unique. Military life was also very different from familiar day to day activities at home in the Illawarra. The importance of home is reflected by the frequent mentions of friends, family and the Illawarra, which were recurring features in most men's letters and diaries. Some men found out too late that war was not what they had expected, or even wanted. Most coped with their changed circumstances, but some, like Albert Sloan did not. Sloan was unlike any other man from the Illawarra: his story may well be unique in the AIF.

²⁰⁴ The ratio of the incidence of shell shock between officers and men was published in Thomas W Salmon, "The Care and Treatment of Mental Diseases and War Neuroses (Shell Shock) in the British Army", *Mental Hygiene*, 1.4, October 1917, pp. 514-5 cited in Bourke, "Shell Shock and Australian Soldiers in the Great War", *Sabretache*, Vol. XXXVI, July/September 1995.

Chapter Five

“Though death divides, fond memory
lives”²⁰⁵

Death and the Home Front

After the euphoria of enthusiastic send-offs the pall of death descended on the Illawarra in 1915 as the first casualty lists appeared. The ultimate product of war is death, and families and friends of the fallen were recipients in much the same way as those in the rest of Australia. Men were slaughtered without respect to age, religion or any other form of social identification. Although it has been demonstrated that some types of units were more likely to sustain casualties than others, the death from war was an ever-threatening possibility for every person with family or friends at the front. Official procedures meant that similarities existed in the way in which families were notified of death and the way in which they were forced to communicate with the authorities regarding death and injury, but breakdowns in these processes often led to extended discourse between officialdom and family thus adding to the trauma that the war had already brought to these families. The way in which both individuals and the community dealt with their losses in the Illawarra is undoubtedly similar to the experiences of many communities throughout Australia, especially those with both strong familial links within their regions and a strong territorial representation in the AIF.

With the first casualty lists came the first memorial services which had a profound effect on the Illawarra community. At the first such public service held on Sunday 6 June 1915 hundreds of people converged in central Wollongong to honour two deceased soldiers, and perhaps for some, to

²⁰⁵ Verse frequently appearing in the ‘On Active Service’ memorial notices, *South Coast Times*.

secretly give thanks that their own kin had been spared. A combined service was held in the Town Hall for Congregationalist Alfred Shipp²⁰⁶ and Presbyterian Robert McClelland.²⁰⁷ These services were originally to have been held in the soldiers' respective churches but the crowd which was expected, and eventuated, led to a change of venue. Ministers from both denominations spoke to those who were able to fit inside the building whilst the rest waited outside. It was a scene which the *Illawarra Mercury* described as 'impressive'.²⁰⁸ For those present it was a realisation that whilst there may be honour in the heroics of defending one's country, the cost was to be in human life.

Shipp was a popular and well known young man who had grown up in Keiraville and was a school teacher at Mount Kembla Public School at the time of his enlistment. His death was also undoubtedly difficult for his pupils who now knew that war was much more serious than raising money and creating goods for the Red Cross, soldiers' comforts funds and various other relief causes. Shipp's family were also amongst the first of many in the Illawarra to have to deal the bureaucratic paperwork necessary to sort out their son's affairs. Through their solicitor the Shipp family contacted both AIF Base Records and George Burns MHR in an effort to obtain a death certificate for their son. Correspondence between his family and the authorities constantly refers to the need for a death certificate to settle his affairs. It also mentions the inconvenience that the delay is causing his family. Shipp's family were not financially dependent on his income, and it is far more likely that their real need was for something tangible to prove that their son had died. With no body and no death certificate it was difficult for many families to come to terms with their loss. An official notice of death was finally issued on 5 October 1915 stating that he had been killed on 21 May 1915. However, this was not the final word from the military authorities, five months later the Shipp family received another

²⁰⁶ Cpl 289 Alfred Nathan Shipp, 3 Bn, single, school teacher of Keiraville, enlisted 27 August 1914. KIA 27 April 1915 aged 22 years.

²⁰⁷ Sgt 82 Robert John McClelland, 3 Bn, single, mechanical engineer of Wollongong, enlisted 17 August 1914. KIA 26 April 1915 aged 21 years.

letter from Base Records which probably came as a shock to the family. On 30 March 1916 they were informed that their son had in fact been killed in action on 27 April 1915.

The trauma of losing a son was terrible enough, but for some parents there were no clear answers from the authorities when their sons fate was uncertain, which could lead to years of agonising pain. Communication was by mail and telegraphic cable, the latter which was considerably quicker than the former, but still incredibly slow by late twentieth century standards.

When Mrs Isabel Smith received a telegram dated 24 September 1915 informing her that her son Arthur²⁰⁹ had been wounded between 21 August and 25 August she would have undoubtedly been relieved to know that at least he was still alive, unlike three of his fellow Illawarra mates of the 18 Battalion who had died in the same action.²¹⁰ Having heard nothing further by 17 October 1915 Mrs Smith, anxious to know the whereabouts of her son so she could send him Christmas parcels, wrote the first of what would be many letters to the authorities.

AIF Base records in Melbourne replied promptly, but knowing nothing more they suggest she prefix his unit address with the word “wounded” when sending further mail. Parcels were sent, but by April 1916 Mrs Smith had received no further information from the AIF, nor had she heard from her son Arthur. But she had received letters from the Red Cross and from his comrades at the front. The AIF asked for these letters but Mrs Smith was unwilling to part with the only real news she had received about her

²⁰⁸ *Illawarra Mercury*, 8 June 1915

²⁰⁹ Pte 992 Arthur William Smith, 18 Bn, horse driver, single of Helensburgh, enlisted 6 February 1915. KIA 27 August 1915 aged 21 years.

²¹⁰ Pte 966 Philip Plumb, 18 Bn, labourer, single of Wollongong, enlisted 2 February 1915. KIA 22 August 1915 aged 23 years. Plumb had also been a member of the ANMEF 1 Bn; Pte 505 John William Donovan, 18 Bn, dairyman, single of Gerringong, enlisted 5 February 1915. KIA 22 August 1915 aged 22 or 23; Pte 999 William Thrower, 18 Bn, of Scarborough, enlisted 13 February 1915. KIA 22 August 1915. Another two Illawarra men of the 18 Bn, from Helensburgh and Woonona, died of wounds shortly after the 22 August 1915. They were likely to have been wounded in the same action by the battalion which, from a strength of 750, lost 11 officers and 372 men, half of whom were killed. An account of this action is described by Bean in the *Official History*, Vol II, pp 740-44.

son. In a letter dated 2 May 1916 she writes:

...you have asked me to forward letters I have in possession from Red Cross also from the front, Pardon me, but I do really treasure all letters that come from the front as I have many a dear friend over there and they may go astray. I can give you the name of one, a Private Brown now Sgt Brown who was one of his comrades in C Company 18th Battalion who has written to me and told me he was dead, he was wounded severely in a charge on the 22nd day of Aug 1915 and died from the effects of his wounds with bullets in the stomach. Brown could not find him after the charge. Surely, Sir, there must be a recount of the discs of these boys. I would like you to grant me the favour I asked you to try and get the matter cleared up and made definite to me by so doing you will greatly oblige.

I Smith

The tone of this letter is much stronger than those previously penned by Mrs Smith. By this point she may well have been in a state of total confusion. She had the AIF stating they knew nothing of her son's whereabouts and others saying that they knew of his fate. Mrs Smith would have had little reason to doubt the information sent to her by Brown.²¹¹ He had been in the same company as her son Arthur, had trained and embarked with him, had been with him when he was wounded and quite possibly had known Arthur and his family before enlisting.

As well as Sergeant Brown's letter to Mrs Smith, the AIF had also taken a deposition from another member of C Company present on 22 August 1915. Private A E Ringrose stated that 'Smith fell during the retirement and had to be left. He appeared to be wounded very badly and was never seen again'.²¹²

It was not until 27 September 1917, following a court of inquiry, that Private Arthur Smith was officially declared to have been killed in action. The date of his death was stated as being on or about the 27 August 1915.²¹³ Mrs Smith had waited two years for official notification of her son's death.

²¹¹ Sergeant 814 Thomas Brown, 18 Bn, miner, single of Scarborough, enlisted 13 February 1915, RTA 23 March 1919. Born c1886 Lanarkshire Scotland.

²¹² Statement of Private A E Ringrose, 18 Bn, taken at No. 2 Hospital, Gezirah. Document contained within the official records of Arthur William Smith, NAA B2455.

²¹³ No documents within Smith's dossier support this date as the date of death.

It is apparent that for more than just a few families there was often no doubt that their family member had been killed, yet they too received this news from unofficial sources. When the parents of Sergeant Keith Rixon²¹⁴ received a parcel on 23 June 1915 from a comrade of their son, Private R Waugh, it was the first that they knew of his death. Included in the parcel was Rixon's detailed diary in which the last entry was made on 30 April 1915. The news from Waugh was in fact correct, and Rixon was officially listed as having been killed on 6 May 1915.²¹⁵

Criticism of bureaucratic bungling in the transmission of information between family and the authorities may be somewhat unfair considering the means of communication at the time and the sheer number of men and their families that were involved, but the consequences for families must have been incredibly frustrating and often with a tragic outcome. The communication of the fate of volunteers was dependent on the clerical competency of the AIF and it was the families that suffered as a result of their incompetence. Sons and brothers had volunteered and offered their lives; at the very least the AIF had a responsibility to take the utmost care with the information that was sent to their families. The AIF's system of alphabetic allocation of numbers within companies and reinforcements appears to have at times aggravated the problem. This situation became a reality for the Clout family when the identity of their son was confused with that of another man.

Edward Percy Clout was one of many Balgownie boys who had enlisted in August 1915. When his father was notified in September 1916 that he had been wounded it would have created sorrow and anxiety within his family, but the communication between the family and the AIF in the following three years was not only heartbreaking, and also perhaps avoidable had better administration and communication been in place. Having received no

²¹⁴ Sgt 513 William Keith Rixon, 3 Bn, single, telegraphist of Bulli, enlisted 25 August 1914. KIA 6 May 1915 aged 24.

²¹⁵ AWM 145 Roll of Honour.

further letters from her son. Mrs Clout took up the task of corresponding with AIF Base Records to find out where he was. She was advised on 5 February 1917 that her son had remained on duty after being wounded, but by then had found out herself, probably from casualty lists, that a F E Clout with the number 3733 and of the same unit had been wounded in that same week in September 1916.²¹⁶ AIF Base Records replied that the wounded man had in fact been F E Clout and not her son, E P Clout, but offered no further information on what had become of her son. It was now apparent that a soldier was unaccounted for and on 22 April 1917 a court of inquiry found that Edward Percy Clout had been killed in action on 11 August 1916.

The AIF had been unsure of E P Clout's fate, but one of his comrades, Private Whitbread²¹⁷ was not:

Poor Percy ... is now missing. You will know that means the worst, and that there is no doubt he has fallen. I have just learned you are seeking news of him. I am very sorry indeed to tell you there is no hope of his safety. Before going into action at Pozieres the Balgownie boys were separated a good deal. I was nearest him but last saw him at dawn on the morning of the 10th August. The gun's crew I was on went out along the trench to support an attack; we came in at dawn and I passed Percy's position and stayed a few minutes chatting with him. That night he met his fate but I was not near that part of the trench again and so only know what others have told me; it appears he was slightly wounded in a finger at first. He went along to the advanced dressing station, had his wound dressed and made back to his gun. No further news can be learned of him; he must have been killed as he was returning. He was in every way a son for you to be proud of, always a good clean living lad, with high ideals, and strong sense of honor. He was the best of comrades. And one whose loss I will always feel keenly.²¹⁸

The Clout family placed the first of numerous 'in memoriam' notices in the local press on 25 May 1917, but Mrs Clout continued to write to the authorities for the next few years, always asking if any further information had been forthcoming on the circumstances of her son's death. Was Mrs Clout still unsure of her son's demise? Notes kept by a Balgownie man,

²¹⁶ Mrs Clout to AIF Base Records 9 February 1917. NAA B2455 Edward Percy Clout.

²¹⁷ Pte 3954 Lionel Stephen Whitbread, 4 MGB, of Balgownie, enlisted 30 August 1915, RTA 2 March 1919.

²¹⁸ Pte Whitbread to Mrs Clout, published in the *South Coast Times*, 18 May 1917. At the time this letter was published Pte Whitbread was listed as missing.

William Davies mention that there had been mysterious reports that Percy Clout was dead, alive or mad.²¹⁹ The placing of 'in memoriam' notices suggests not only a formal or public acceptance of the death of their son, but also a means to curb any innuendo and gossip that was occurring. Mrs Clout's continuing questioning of the authorities suggests that she was still holding out hope, even when all hope was seemingly lost.

Clergymen were the messengers of death. The decision of the churches to accept this responsibility had been decided on early in the war by church leaders. As the casualties mounted the presence of a clergyman in a residential street where many men had enlisted became the source of anxiety for the residents who rightly feared that he may knock on their door.²²⁰ The toll was continuous in the Illawarra, but some heavy battles increased their visiting considerably. Forty deaths in August 1915 after the battle of Lone Pine took clergymen to every corner of the region, as did similarly large numbers after Fromelles in July 1916 and Messines, Passchendaele and Polygon Wood in 1917.

Sometimes the news of the death of a soldier was conveyed by someone else. No matter who broke the news, there was always great sorrow. Leslie Sproule of Jamberoo did not enlist but his three brothers did.²²¹ He recalls how the news of the death of his brother Stan was received in his home:

Then the blow struck us. I will always remember the scene in our home when Miss Colley and a Police Officer brought the news that Stan, who was only 23 years old, was reported missing, believed dead, on the 4th June, 1917 at Messines. Miss Colley held Mother in her arms while her heart almost broke. A sad mantle settled on our lives. This news was followed shortly afterwards that Hugh was wounded and would be transferred to hospital in England. Hugh returned to France and was again wounded and believed to be returning the third time when the Armistice was signed.²²²

²¹⁹ Notes kept by William Davies of Balgownie. Private collection.

²²⁰ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, p. 73.

²²¹ Pte 2704 Thomas Stanley Sproule, 37 Bn, single, farmer of Jamberoo, enlisted 9 October 1916. KIA 7-9 July 1917 aged 23 years; Pte 2703 David Hugh Sproule, 37 Bn single, farmer of Jamberoo, enlisted 9 October 1916, RTA 20 July 1919. Tpr 1768 David Oliver Sproule, 7 LH, single, farmer of Jamberoo, enlisted 13 September 1915, RTA 6 July 1919.

²²² Unpublished autobiography by Leslie Sproule of Jamberoo. Private collection.

The pain of a parent's loss is frequently conveyed in the answers they gave to the questions on the Roll of Honour circular. These forms were sent to the next of kin of deceased soldiers during the 1920s. Isabella Scott made the most of the opportunity to speak of her son, Robert,²²³ when completing his Roll of Honour circular. Although question seven, which asks for other biographical details and is often left blank by respondents, in this case the pride and grief of this mother is conveyed in her reply: 'He had a wireless station and received messages when only 19 at his own home he was a clever boy in all.'²²⁴ This was indeed a very close family for when completing his attestation papers, Robert Scott listed not one person, but his whole family as next of kin.²²⁵

As one of the local clergy, the Presbyterian minister Reverend Donald McKay Barnet had been the bearer of tragic news for many families. He also lost his own son, Robert Barnet,²²⁶ and when completing his Roll of Honour Circular Reverend Barnet took the opportunity to record some of the personal qualities of his son:

He had keen insight and power of expression. He had a keen appreciation of the beautiful. He excelled as an amateur photographer. He was a lad of high ideals and strove to live up to them...²²⁷

When the news of Barnet's death was received in Wollongong, his father was performing chaplain duty at a citizen's forces camp in Sydney and his mother was a patient in a Sydney Hospital. The news was broken to the parents by the Church of England minister, the Reverend Charles Stubbin, whose own son, Claude²²⁸ was at the front.²²⁹

²²³ Pte 1917 Robert William Scott, 1917, 1 Pioneers, single, engineer of Balgownie. Born Balgownie 1895, KIA 3 June 1918.

²²⁴ AWM 131, Robert William Scott.

²²⁵ NAA B2455, Robert William Scott.

²²⁶ Pte 2662 Robert J McGregor Barnet, 1 DASP, single, surveyor's cadet of Wollongong, enlisted 4 January 1916. DOW 27 August 1916 aged 21 years.

²²⁷ AWM 131, Robert McGregor Barnet

²²⁸ Lt Claude John Stubbin, 10 FAB, single, bank clerk of Wollongong, enlisted 17 June 1915, RTA 16 March 1919.

²²⁹ *Illawarra Mercury*, 22 September 1916.

For hundreds of Illawarra families the price for their son's, husband's and brothers' decision to fight for their country was death. Whether this news was transmitted in a straightforward manner or extracted from the authorities after a protracted period of correspondence the result was grief and loss. Families and friends were left to deal with this as best they could.

Memorials to the dead have been an important part of the mourning process throughout history. The ritual of burial and commemoration in some form is part of the grieving process so even without a body to bury, some families added the names of the sons and brothers to family headstones in their local cemeteries, just as they did for family members who died here. But this practice was not common considering the numbers of men who died, and who were members of established families with family plots in local cemeteries. Bulli cemetery, large by Illawarra standards and including all denominations, contains just seven inscriptions for fallen soldiers. In the very small old Wesleyan and Presbyterian cemetery in Wollongong five such inscriptions exist.

As families grieved individually as the death toll continued throughout the war, memorials to the dead and rolls of honour for those on active service began to appear in the region. At first these were hand-written or printed lists, but more substantial monuments were in existence by 1917. At Gerringong a postcard of a board listing names was produced before the end of the war. The title is 'Gerringong, Roll of Honour, European War 1914 – 191_', a hopeful and close guess as to the war's end. At Port Kembla in September 1916 a Roll of Honour listing 67 'gallant young fellows' was unveiled by Mrs White, the president of the local Red Cross.²³⁰ At Scarborough-Clifton a marble plaque with 59 names already engraved was unveiled at Scarborough railway platform by local politicians Burns and Nicholson on 10 February 1917.²³¹

²³⁰ *Illawarra Mercury*, 12 September 1916.

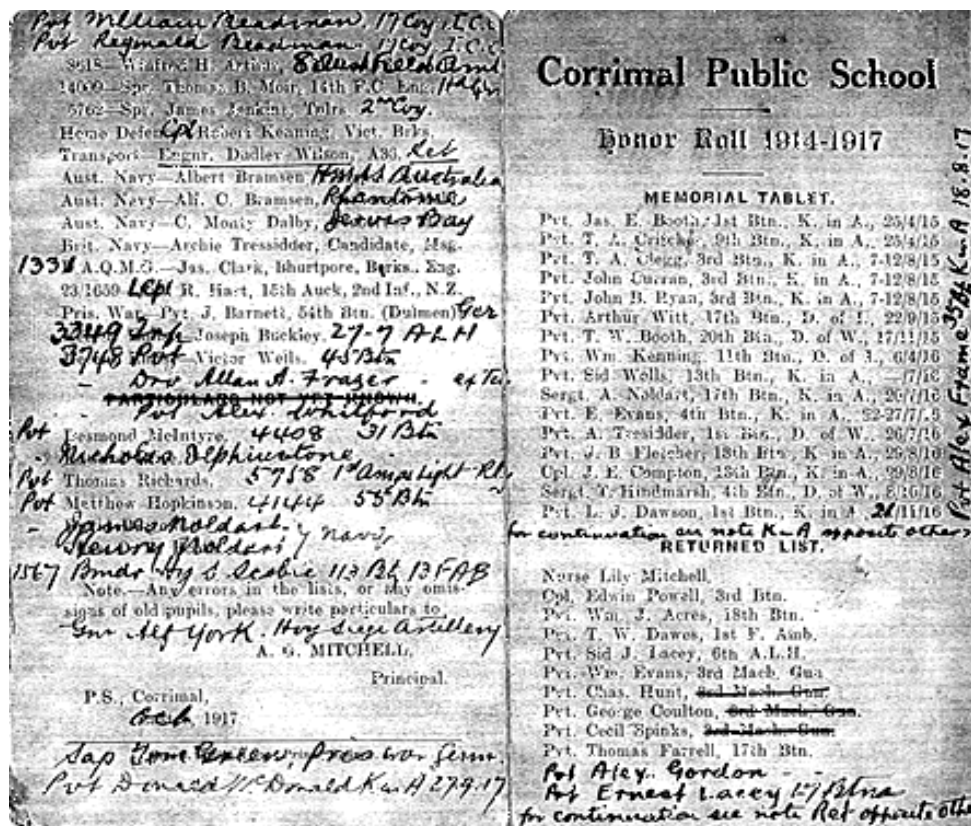
²³¹ *South Coast Times*, 9 February 1917.

Michael McKernan argues that during the war, regional towns published lists and created honour boards naming all who had volunteered as a public scoreboard, measuring the level of loyalty between neighbouring towns, and used by recruiting officers to shame men into enlisting.²³² This may well have been true for some towns with established rivalries and insecure identities. However, it is hard to envisage this practice in the Illawarra, which although a town and village collective exhibited a strong united identity. Published lists of volunteers were at times listed by locality but usually as part of a complete list covering all parts of the region. Honour rolls were created and maintained by men and women from various sectors of the community including businesses, churches and schools who were not known to be actively involved in the recruiting process.

The Corrimal Public School was perhaps the first, and certainly the most active and publicised community organisation to honour the participation and memory of their former pupils and residents in this way. In May 1915 the *Illawarra Mercury* noted that the Corrimal Roll of Honour contained the names of 59 enlistees, 18 of whom were former pupils of the school.²³³ By Easter 1917 the school had produced a small booklet listing those who had died, returned, or were still on active service, entitled *Corrimal Public School Honor Roll 1914-1917*. This list of former pupils who were volunteers extended beyond just a list of names: it also recorded their numbers, units and whether they had been wounded or killed. A surviving copy of this booklet is heavily annotated and re-dated October 1917. Eventually the honour roll contained 149 names and it is still held by Corrimal Public School. A separate monument listing former pupils was erected in the school grounds, and another community monument was unveiled on Anzac Day 1922. With Roll of Honour boards mounted in the the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches of Corrimal, and the Bellambi monument now standing in Corrimal Memorial Park, the Corrimal area has perhaps the most memorials of any locality in the Illawarra.

²³² McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, p. 187.

²³³ *Illawarra Mercury* 28 May 1915.



Corrimal Public School Honor Roll 1914-1917

The efforts in compiling and maintaining the Corrimal Public School Roll of Honour were largely due to one man, Albert Mitchell, principal from 1900 to 1922. Mitchell also devoted a considerable amount of his own time and finances to keep the local volunteers in contact with their home town. He went to every soldiers' home and took a photograph which he sent to them with a brief message. The photograph of the Buchanan family home in Princess Street, Corrimal is typical of these.



Buchanan Home, Princess Street, Corrimal

1992 Pitt R. G. Buchanan Aug 30 Bk
 Dear George. I made an attempt to take
 your parents place in Corrimal, with
 the 2 little nippers in front. Your sister
 was at the rear corner post, but moved
 so far back which should be showing is
 not there. I hope to take it again, but
 am at present doing the rounds to each
 home. I took 3 today & still have several
 more. Still poor as this is, it will I hope
 be acceptable & of interest. See ok
 brother.
 12.4.17
 A G Mitchell
 Corrimal

Mitchell's message to Private Buchanan

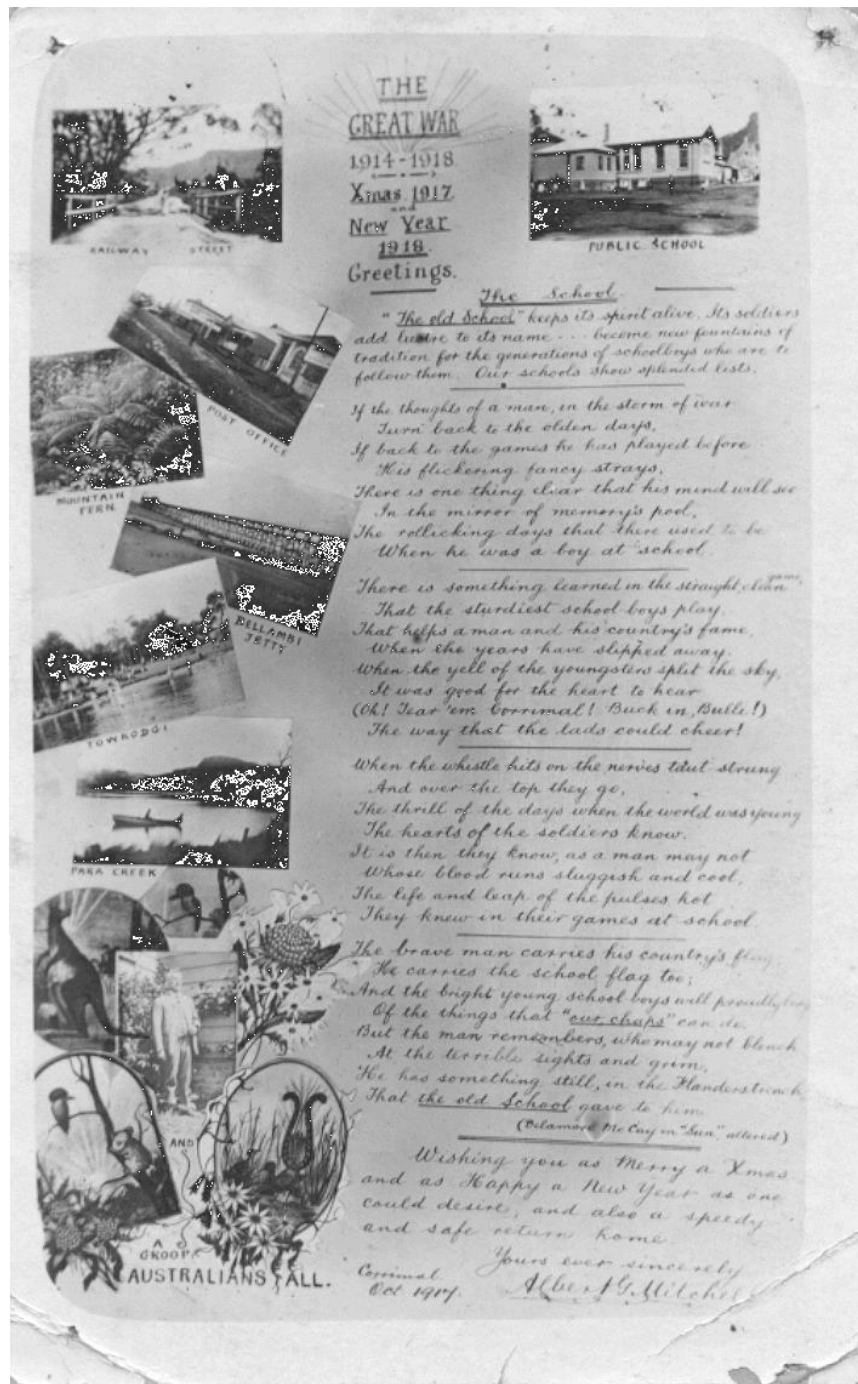
Mitchell also took photographs of the local churches to send to the boys. On the back of a photograph of the Corrimal Presbyterian Church sent to T B Moir²³⁴ was the following:

Tom
 A view I took recently of the church to send to all the Pres. Lads on my Honor Roll. It will bring up many memories of meetings there and good lessons learned. Best wishes, Albert G Mitchell, Corrimal, 28.2.1917.²³⁵

²³⁴ Spr 14009 Tom Ballantyne Moir, 14 Field Company Engineers, single, bank clerk of Corrimal, enlisted 20 January 1916, RTA 20 May 1919.

²³⁵ Photograph in private collection.

In October 1917 Mitchell had a Christmas postcard printed with photographs of the Corrimal area with a long, hand-written poem entitled *The School*.



This was an extraordinary effort by Principal Mitchell. He knew these boys and men well and his personal messages displayed the hallmark of a teacher whose interest in his former pupils extended far beyond the schoolyard and the span of a student's formal education. These photographs and postcards were a welcome message from home, especially for many families who did not have any other means of sending their photographs to their sons. His efforts in keeping track of so many former pupils would also have aided families with missing sons who wanted to write to their friends in the hope of finding out further information.

As well as civic memorials, most Protestant denominations erected memorials to members of their congregations who had served in the AIF. Interestingly, and perhaps reflective of the lack of adherence to a particular denomination, some men appear on the memorials of churches of different denominations. Four men who gave their religion as Catholic at enlistment appear on Protestant memorials. James Fenwick²³⁶ is listed on the Helensburgh Methodist memorial, Abraham Clifford²³⁷ and Joseph Buchanan²³⁸ are included amongst the Dapto Church of England volunteers. John Harris²³⁹ is listed on the Corrimal Church of England memorial. There is no clear reason for this. In discussing the way in which various churches charged each other with, and defended themselves against, to allegations of under and over representation from their respective denominations in the AIF, Michael McKernan cites errors in enlistment papers, amongst other reasons given by church leaders for anomalies.²⁴⁰ It could be that these four 'Catholics' were mis-recorded as such on their attestation papers. Or perhaps they were the offspring of 'mixed marriages', prohibited by the

²³⁶ Pte 1191 James Fenwick, 17 Bn, married, miner of Helensburgh, enlisted 31 January 1915. Born Bulli, DOW 16 April 1917 aged 25 years. James Fenwick's brother enlisted and gave his religion as Church of England.

²³⁷ Pte 1888 Abraham Joseph Clifford, 53 Bn, single, quarryman of Wollongong, enlisted 24 February 1916. KIA 17 November 1917 aged 34 years.

²³⁸ Cpl 6476 Joseph Buchanan, 13 Bn, single, labourer of Dapto, enlisted 15 May 1916, RTA 19 June 1919.

²³⁹ Pte 2929 John Thomas Harris, 2 Bn, single, brickmaker of Bellambi, enlisted 26 July 1915. DOW 25 September 1917 aged 19 years. This man was the first and probably only Illawarra volunteer to die from wounds sustained in an air raid in London during WWI.

²⁴⁰ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, p. 161.

Catholic Church between 1885 and 1937. Far more common was multiple Protestant representation. At least 50 Illawarra volunteers are listed on church monuments which do not match the denomination which they gave at the time of their enlistment.

As a Catholic, Arthur Trevor Copas²⁴¹ was not memorialised on a Church memorial as Catholics simply did not erect such monuments. Copas did however appear on three civic memorials and one school memorial.²⁴² He is also the subject of a special plaque inside St Francis Xavier's Roman Catholic Church in Wollongong which was placed in the church by his parents.

Community memorials do not always reflect the extent of local enlistments. Approximately one-third of all Illawarra volunteers are not listed on any memorial in the region.²⁴³ Men whose next of kin were listed as being overseas were less likely to be listed on local memorials.²⁴⁴ Having family in the region seems to have been almost mandatory if a volunteer was to be acknowledged in this way after the war. Although men were readily claimed by the press and community during the war, many were simply forgotten when names were submitted to memorial committees after the war. James Crompton²⁴⁵ had no next of kin in Australia and had spent five of his twenty-eight years in Canada before arriving here, but he seems to have quickly become part of the community. Killed in action in June 1917 he was not forgotten and is listed on both the Bulli and Woonona-Bulli RSL memorials. Crompton was an exception. In contrast, another volunteer with no family in Australia was Thomas Crozier who enlisted from Mount

²⁴¹ Pte 3614 Arthur Trevor Copas, 13 Bn, clerk of Wollongong, enlisted 16 May 1917. KIA Vere Wood 4 July 1918 aged 30 years.

²⁴² Bulli, Wollongong, Woonona-Bulli RSL, Wollongong Public School.

²⁴³ From a total of 2 336 volunteers, 836 are not listed on an Illawarra memorial.

²⁴⁴ Approximately 82 per cent of men with overseas next of kin are not listed on any memorial. This figure is expected to be considerably higher when the backgrounds of men with few details are established.

²⁴⁵ Pte 2678 James Crompton, 37 Bn, single, miner of Woonona, enlisted 7 October 1916. KIA 8 June 1917 aged 30 years. NOK of Lancashire, England.

Kembla. Crozier was not mentioned on any memorial, despite his mother sending fifteen pounds to the local community in gratitude for their care of her son.²⁴⁶

Staff Sergeant-Major George McFeeley²⁴⁷ was the first Illawarra man to be killed on the Western Front but he was not a member of the AIF, nor is he listed on an Illawarra memorial. Yet his death was mourned by the Illawarra community and the Wollongong woman²⁴⁸ he had married not long before his departure overseas. McFeeley was well known in the Wollongong region having been the local drill instructor before the war. At the outbreak of war he was sent to Liverpool Light Horse camp as a warrant officer but shortly after was recalled to his old British unit, the 1 Life Guards, and immediately returned to England. Within days of arriving in France McFeeley and two others of his unit were killed.²⁴⁹ With McFeeley's high profile in the community, and especially the military sector, his omission from any Illawarra memorial is curious, given that others with more tenuous links to the region were listed.

Generally memorials in the Illawarra were the result of community effort. Some prominent families exerted considerable influence in the erection of their local monuments. The Kiama district was home to the Fuller family. Colin Dunmore Fuller DSO and Bar was the Illawarra's most decorated officer in World War I whose brother, George Fuller, served several terms in parliament and was premier of New South Wales from 1922 to 1925. Fundraising for a war memorial began in Kiama in 1919 with various proposals put forward including a drinking fountain and a hospital ward.²⁵⁰ But it was the suggestion by Colin Fuller of a basalt arch to be erected at the

²⁴⁶ *South Coast Times* 20 June 1919.

²⁴⁷ Corporal of Horse 2426 George Edward McFeeley, 1Life Guards, KIA 27 April 1915 aged 32 years.

²⁴⁸ This was Kathleen Galvin, a daughter of Jack Galvin, proprietor of the Brighton Hotel which was a popular venue for soldiers' farewell functions during World War I.

²⁴⁹ *Illawarra Mercury*, 25 June 1915.

²⁵⁰ Bayley, *op cit*, p. 123.

corner of Terralong and Collins Streets that was adopted. Premier George Fuller opened the memorial on Anzac Day 1925.²⁵¹

At Thirroul the driving force behind the erection of a local memorial came from the other end of the social spectrum. Granny Riach became principal collector of funds for the Thirroul memorial, which was the first substantial World War I monument to be constructed in the Illawarra.²⁵² This is not surprising given that the fund, originally known as the 'Fountain Fund', was begun in January 1917 and actively added to until the opening of the memorial in April 1920. The Thirroul monument also acknowledges the efforts and sacrifices of a whole community:

Erected by public subscription in honour of fellow citizens who gave their lives and of those who gave their services in the interests of public humanity during the Great War 1914-1919.²⁵³

More often, memorials took years of discussion and fund-raising before they were actually built. Planning for a Balgownie memorial, for example, was not even begun until after most other local memorials had been completed. It was not until May 1928 that the first meeting to elect a committee to plan and raise funds for a memorial was held. Two years and numerous concerts, balls and raffles later, the memorial was finally unveiled on 26 April 1930. The Hon. William Morris Hughes was to have officially opened the monument but withdrew just days beforehand. His place was taken by Colonel Dr Maguire who spoke with both passion and personal experience as the son of a former Balgownie school teacher, and a man who had served during the war.²⁵⁴

Community memorials were intended to honour the members of the immediate locality. On most Illawarra memorials those who served are listed, a practice which is virtually unknown in many parts of the world, and

²⁵¹ *Ibid*

²⁵² Earlier forms of memorials (usually an honour board) had been erected, but the Thirroul monument is almost certainly the first of the civic monuments to be erected after the war.

²⁵³ Thirroul Cenotaph.

²⁵⁴ *Illawarra Mercury*, 29 April 1930; *South Coast Times*, 2 May 1930.

uncommon in the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand.²⁵⁵ In his study of war memorials in Australia, Ken Inglis has found that survivors are listed on just over half of Australian war memorials. In comparing World War I memorials in Australia and New Zealand Inglis found that Australians listed all who had volunteered, as well as the dead, at three times the rate that New Zealanders did. This, he attributed to the unique situation of Australians as one of only two nations who maintained a voluntary system of participation in World War I.²⁵⁶ Thus the Illawarra is unusual in that only one civic memorial, Coledale's, names only those who died. This may well have reflected the strong presence of members of Industrial Workers of the World at Coledale. Their anti-war sentiment could perhaps only extend to memorialise the dead, and not those who had contributed to the fighting of what they considered to be a capitalists' war. The naming of all volunteers on other memorials is akin to honouring the act of volunteering. The strength of community interest in all volunteers is demonstrated by the creation of permanent monuments in every village and town in the Illawarra which continued the practice already evident with the numerous honour rolls compiled during the war. But for many in Coledale there was no honour in volunteering, although respect was still given to the deceased.

Death was an inevitable product of war. The death of a soldier was tragic enough for the family, but the uncertainties and complications brought about by incorrect information received from the AIF only created more distress. The crowds that gathered at memorial services and the community collaboration in the creation of memorials indicate that grieving was both personal and communal, with the erection of monuments part of the grieving process.

²⁵⁵ Inglis, *Sacred Places*, p. 182.

²⁵⁶ *ibid*, pp. 183-4.

Conclusion

Despite being more a collection of villages than a single sprawling town a strong regional identity existed in the Illawarra which had grown from the land-locked geographic nature of the region and the strong family networks that had intertwined for a number of generations. Economically the region relied heavily on natural resources and this was reflected in the occupational structure of the men who volunteered.

Although patterns of enlistment mirrored those at state and national level, there were some variations attributable to local circumstances. The characteristics of the Illawarra volunteers did however show a marked difference in some respects. Whilst age and marital status of the Illawarra volunteers was on par with the AIF, religious affiliations and the occupational structure of these volunteers was not. Both of these aspects were determined by local factors. The strength of the lesser Protestant denominations amongst the volunteers had its basis in the existing denominational structure of the region, and although more difficult to determine, the lack of enlistment response by Catholics is at least in part due to their patterns of settlement in farming areas of the region during the nineteenth century. The occupational structure of the Illawarra volunteers was determined by the economic activity present in the region. Occupations of both the Illawarra volunteers and those from the Shire of Yackandandah differed greatly from the AIF as a whole. This suggests that the national occupational structure of volunteers should be taken as more an averaged profile than a reflection of Australian volunteers for it fits neither the Illawarra or the Shire of Yackandandah.

The motivations for enlistment continue to remain elusive for volunteers rarely expressed their reasons for enlisting before they did so, regardless of

where they came from. From the records that the volunteers did leave behind it is difficult to determine their initial motivations. Patterns of enlistment for the Illawarra have shown that joining up with a friend or relative was a common occurrence, but individual reasons can at the best only be deduced from the available evidence. Whether or not it had been an incentive in the first place, the Illawarra volunteer was as much a tourist as any other member of the AIF, borne of the circumstances of fighting a war thousands of miles from home. For men who may have enlisted in search of adventure or for the excitement of battle, the experience of bullets, shells, gas and disease was a sudden awakening to the reality of warfare. The fragility of the human body was no match for the weaponry of war.

The examination of some individual war experiences shows that each volunteer's war was different and each had their own unique story, yet there were obvious similarities with the experiences of others from within the Illawarra region and further afield. Thoughts of home were frequently noted as were chance meetings with friends and acquaintances from home.

Death was an unavoidable aspect of war for 60 000 Australians, with the Illawarra having a higher death rate than the national average. The individual experiences of just a handful of Illawarra volunteers are profiled here but they also echo the response of many other Australian families and communities. Death was the final act in the life of many soldiers, but considerable and often unnecessary pain was brought to many families because of instances of bureaucratic bungling. The existing social strengths within the region were undoubtedly a positive and uniting force as the community coped with their losses during the war and in the creation of memorials in the years that followed.

This study of the responses of the Illawarra volunteers reveals the intricacies of place in an event of national importance. There were obvious similarities with other parts of Australia, but there were also differences reflecting distinct regional characteristics and circumstances.

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